

*Contextualizing “China’s Foreign Aid”: A Mixed-Method Synthesis on the
Recent State of Debate on the Concepts and Criticisms of China’s Foreign Aid
from 2005-2020*



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Abbreviations

- AIIB** Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
- ATDCs** Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers
- BRI** The Belt and Road Initiative
- CCP** Chinese Communist Party
- CDB** China Development Bank
- CIDCA** Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency
- CHEXIM** China Export-Import Bank
- CNKI** China National Knowledge Infrastructure
- DAC** Development Assistance Committee
- FOCAC** Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
- MOFA** Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- MOFCOM** Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation
- NDB** New Development Bank
- ODA** Official Development Assistance
- OOF** Other Official Flow
- OF** Vague Official Finance
- SSC** South-South Cooperation
- SOEs** State-Owned-Enterprises

Abstract

This paper compares how Chinese and international scholars conceptualize China's foreign aid. By analyzing recent Chinese and English journal articles on China's foreign aid, this paper addresses the communication and research gaps between Chinese scholars and non-Chinese scholars. This paper applies the general principle of systematic review to select eligible studies. It further combines content analysis and thematic analysis to figure out research topics and publication trends and compare scholars' key viewpoints on the definition, motivation, implementation modes, and impacts of China's foreign aid.

The review synthesis results of this paper suggest that: (1) China's foreign aid activities in the 21st century straddle the boundary between ODA-like state finance and other forms of economic cooperation. It will narrow the scope of the definition if scholars make "China's aid" equivalent to ODA. Measuring the size of China's aid is challenging because of its vague official definition and unspecified project implementation process. (2) Political and economic interests are two primary drivers of China's aid allocation. Contemporary China's aid prioritizes China's economic interests in the globe while still has strong political preferences. Chinese scholars point out that China sometimes provides aid while sacrificing its own domestic development. (3) China's infrastructure and construction projects attract the most international attention on account of their large project size and prominent diplomatic significance. International scholars show interest in examining the role of China's State-Owned-Enterprise in China's large-scale project implementation process, while Chinese scholars point out that private companies and provincial institutions also play significant roles in China's aid. (4) China's commercially based aid and development model has proved to have remarkable and positive economic impacts on the recipient countries. However, China's terms and principles of aid delivery may neglect local citizens' welfare and interests and may show a certain nonchalance to important local governance issues. International scholars generally

hold critical attitudes toward China's rise as a new donor. While debunking adverse claims on China's aid from the western media, they also point out that China's aid model has made some traditional donors reconsider their past theories and practice of aid and development. Chinese scholars affirm that China is not meant to challenge or join the existing OECD-DAC aid regime, while they also acknowledge that China's aid policies and governance still have many drawbacks and require improvements.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, China's aid-giving activities have been highlighted due to its rise as an emerging economic power and a series of high-profile international announcements and strategic partnerships with the 'South'.¹ In an era where the traditional aid and development discourses established by the OECD-DAC (Development Assistance Committee) countries and practices of emerging powers like China in global development cooperation are simultaneously reacting and evolving², China's role as a non-DAC aid donor has become a topic of interest and debate.

The current state of academic debate on China's foreign aid is very fruitful. Regardless of their research backgrounds or language preferences, scholars have contributed to exploring the definition, motivation, modalities, and impacts of China's foreign aid. However, this paper finds that collaboration and communication between Chinese and international scholars are relatively limited, which leads to a knowledge gap among different stakeholders. Against this research background, this paper intends to explore the similarities and differences in recent studies on China's foreign aid from non-Chinese and Chinese scholars. This paper uses a mix-method synthesis approach to select representative studies, explore popular concepts and

¹ Gregory T. Chin, "China as a 'Net Donor': Tracking Dollars and Sense," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 4 (December 2012), p. 599

² Jing Gu, "China's New Silk Road to Development Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges," United Nations University Center for Policy Search (November 1, 2015), p.2
https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:3324/unu_cpr_china_dev.pdf

claims on China's foreign aid, and interpret the synthesis of similarities and differences. In so doing, this paper aims to bridge the language gaps in the recent publications. The body of this paper is divided into five sections. Section 2 introduces and compares the recent issues and debates on ODA and China's aid-giving activities. Section 3 and 4 include a formal literature review on China's foreign aid's academic research and the formulation of research questions. Section 5 introduces the methodologies and outlines the research design and analytical roadmaps for this paper. Section 6 presents the findings of this paper.

2. Research Background

2.1 Global Development Assistance Regime: the OECD-DAC Countries and ODA

2.1.1 Origins and Definition of ODA

The OECD Development Cooperation Directorate (DAC) defines Official development assistance (ODA) as concessional government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries.³ By definition, ODA includes grants, concessional loans, and the provision of technical assistance. It can be provided bilaterally from donor to recipient or channeled through a multilateral development agency.⁴ The definition of ODA has been the “gold standard” for measuring donor efforts in supporting development cooperation objectives since 1969.⁵ The ODA concept has twofold fundamental implications. First, the agreed-upon definition of ODA among the DAC countries represents a major political consensus on the global norms of development finance. Second, ODA is a statistical measure that provides the yardstick for documenting the volume, terms, and conditions of development financing activities by donors.

³ OECD, “Official Development Assistance” (April 2019) <https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/What-is-ODA.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ William Hynes and Simon Scott. “The Evolution of Official Development Assistance: Achievements, Criticisms and a Way Forward,” in OECD Development Cooperation Working Papers, No.12 (December 1, 2013), p.2

As indicated by its definition, the ODA concept is based on the recognition that the official support was the only part of the overall resource flows that was subjected to direct government control.⁶ Figure 1 shows that the general government budget constitutes a significant proportion of the total volume of bilateral ODA (about 70%) among the DAC countries. However, the dispersed nature of the resource flows has its history and has been increasingly recognized.⁷ Figure 2 shows the percentage distribution of five types of resource flows of the DAC countries. It suggests that ODA and private investment have accounted for most of DAC countries' net resource flows to developing countries over the decades, while both the percentage of ODA and private investment experienced pronounced fluctuations. From 2002 to 2008 (see figure 2), there has been a sharp decrease in ODA's proportion in the total resource flows (from 63% to 23%). The impact of 2008 global financial and economic crisis could be one of the intuitive explanations of the decrease. Scholars have argued that the post-2008 economic crisis would further exacerbate pressures on cash-strapped western institutions not facing increased scrutiny to justify domestic electorates' expenditure decisions.⁸

2.1.2 Criticisms and Recent Debates of ODA

ODA has never been a perfect definition and measurement. Debates on ODA's appropriateness as a statistical method and critics on its roles and future never stop. First, as ODA should only represent government-budget-based resource flows according to its strict definition, properly separating ODA from private investment and other types of flows is of great significance. Nevertheless, quantifying and measuring the concessional element and normative development intention of the financial flows have always proved difficult.⁹ The current measurement system is faced with a range of challenges. For example, some DAC

⁶ Hynes and Scott, "Evolution of Official Development Assistance," 3.

⁷ Hynes and Scott, "Evolution of Official Development Assistance," 5.

⁸ Marian Urbina-Ferretjans and Rebecca Surender, "Social Policy in the Context of New Global Actors: How Far Is China's Developmental Model in Africa Impacting Traditional Donors?" *Global Social Policy* 13, no. 3 (December 2013), p.

⁹ Hynes and Scott, "Evolution of Official Development Assistance," 7.

countries use the term “ODA” far more than its original definition.¹⁰ Their calculations of ODA include both government grants and the full value of concessional loan (DAC members have reached an agreement¹¹ in 2014 that agreed the “grant portion” of concessional loans would be considered as ODA). ODA’s misuse could also be attributed to a long-standing United Nations target that developed countries should devote 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA. This quantitative target was initially developed to increase the donor countries’ incentives to contribute more, while their motivations have been distorted in practice. Several donors report loans that borrow from the market and relent at higher rates as concessional ODA to meet the target.¹² Despite the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis, the recent data (2017-2018) show that many donor countries still fell short of their commitment. Figure 3 compares the net ODA as of GNP of major DAC countries during 2007-2008 and 2017-2018. Apart from some Nordic countries, Luxemburg, United Kingdom, Netherlands, many DAC countries failed to reach the target of 0.7% of GNI. Some critics also argue that a triple revolution in goals, stakeholders, and instruments have made ODA increasingly irrelevant as a policy tool.¹³ They also call for alternative measures that can effectively capture the changes in development assistance practice.

Second, the rules, norms, and standards of DAC development cooperation have also experienced significant changes. From the early 1980s, the Western-dominated, neo-liberal prescriptive for economic development, including reforms such as privatization, deregulation, trade liberalization, fiscal discipline, tax reform, has become the dominant approach to enhance development in developing countries known as the “Washington Consensus”.¹⁴ Against this

¹⁰ Jens Martens. “Rethinking ODA: Towards a renewal of Official Development Assistance: A background paper for the United Nations Financing for Development Process.” Global Policy Forum (April 2001), p.7.

¹¹ OECD, “Modernising the Measurement of Concessional Sovereign Loans - OECD,” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/modernisation-dac-statistical-system.htm>

¹² Martens, “Rethinking ODA,” 8.

¹³ Jean-Michel Severino and Olivier Ray, “The End of ODA: Death and Rebirth of a Global Public Policy,” SSRN Scholarly Paper, Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, (March 25, 2009), p.2.

¹⁴ Marcia Don. Harpaz “China’s Coherence in International Economic Governance.” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. 21, no.2, (2016), p.135.

background, a study¹⁵ conducted by the World Bank in 1998 further proposed that aid should be selective, setting a good policy environment of recipient countries as the prerequisite. However, the overall failure of the SAPs in Latin America in the 1990s raised a broader debate that the effectiveness of aid touches on conflict-laden issues between ownership of development programs by recipient countries and the conditionality imposed by donors.¹⁶

Third, the continuing discussion on aid effectiveness also raised a fundamental question about ODA's role and future.¹⁷ Some critics still question whether the government budget-based capital flows can truly reach its development intention or whether ODA worsens the debt crisis in developing countries.¹⁸ Though the endorsements of *Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness* in 2005 represents a milestone in formulating the aid effectiveness norms among DAC countries, the imposition of conditionalities has become the most controversial norms in part when conditions expanded further to cover areas such as the rule of law, human rights, and environmental standards in recipient countries.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the DAC development norms were only slowly and partially put into practice due to the rapid changes of the global development context in recent years, such as the appearance of non-DAC donors, non-state actors, and the growing importance of private financial flows.²⁰

The ODA's current agreed-upon definition represents a fundamental political consensus among DAC countries since the 1960s. As figure 4 shows, though the total global development resource flows have been increasingly diversified with the contribution from the non-DAC countries, traditional DAC donors still commit to most of the shares of the total resource flows. The rise of global economic globalization, the increase of growing private investment, and the

¹⁵ David Dollar and Lant Pritchett. *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why, A World Bank Policy Research Report*. (November 1998). <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/612481468764422935/Assessing-aid-what-works-what-doesnt-and-why>

¹⁶ Martens, "Rethinking ODA," 10.

¹⁷ Martens, "Rethinking ODA," 12.

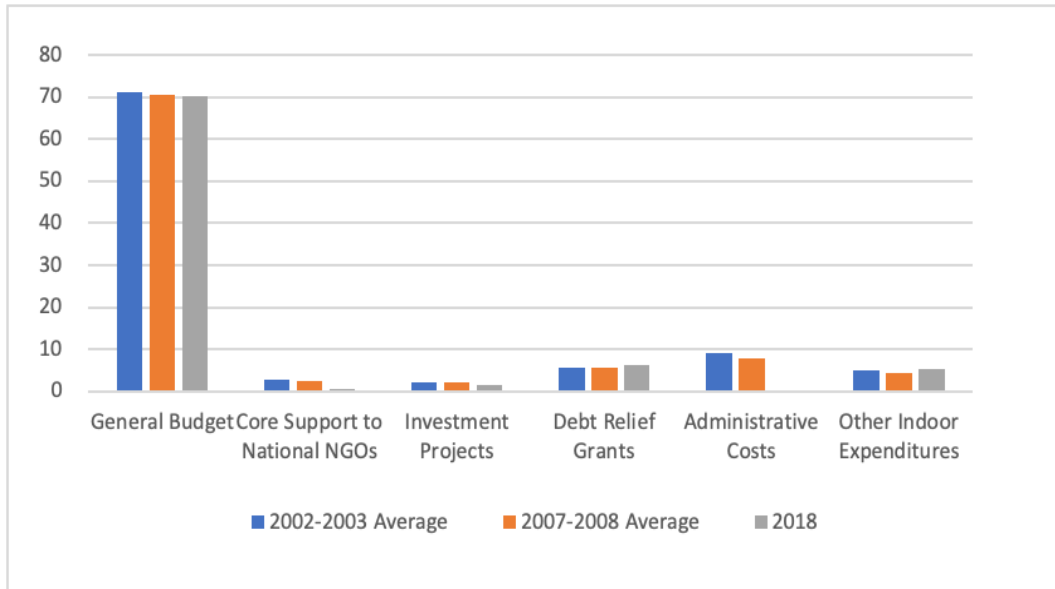
¹⁸ Martens, "Rethinking ODA," 13.

¹⁹ Severino and Ray, "The End of ODA," 4.

²⁰ Stephen Brown, "The Rise and Fall of the Aid Effectiveness Norm," *The European Journal of Development Research* 32, no. 4 (September 1, 2020), p. 1231.

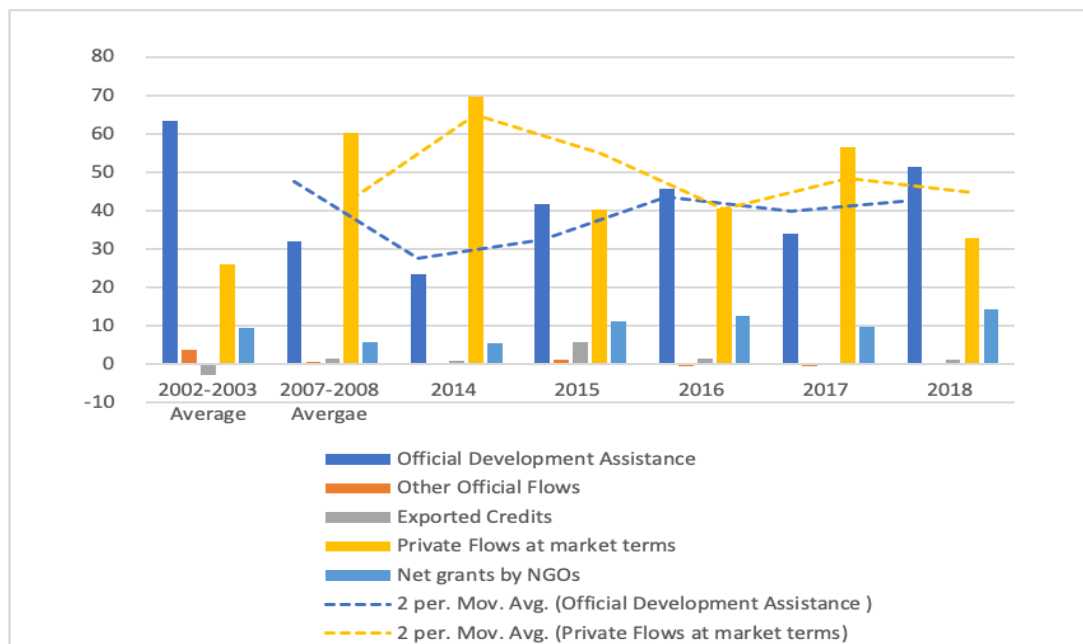
appearance of non-DAC donor countries have gradually changed the landscape of the global development finance market.

**Figure 1 Bilateral ODA by Types of Flow
(Aggregated Total Percent)**



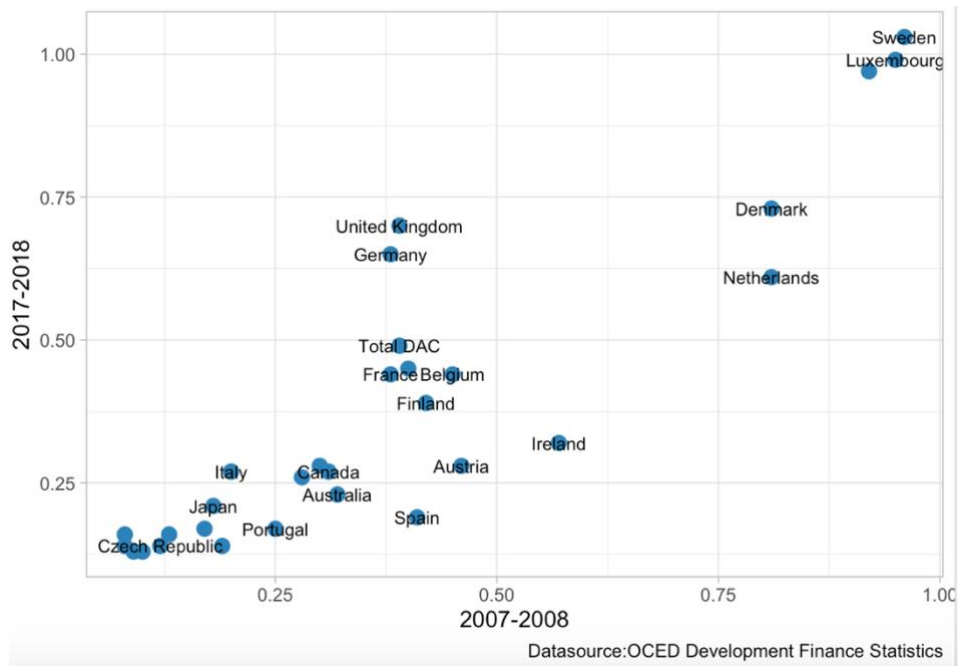
Source: OECD Development Finance Statistics

**Figure 2 Net Resources of DAC Countries by Types of Flow
(Aggregated Total Percent)**



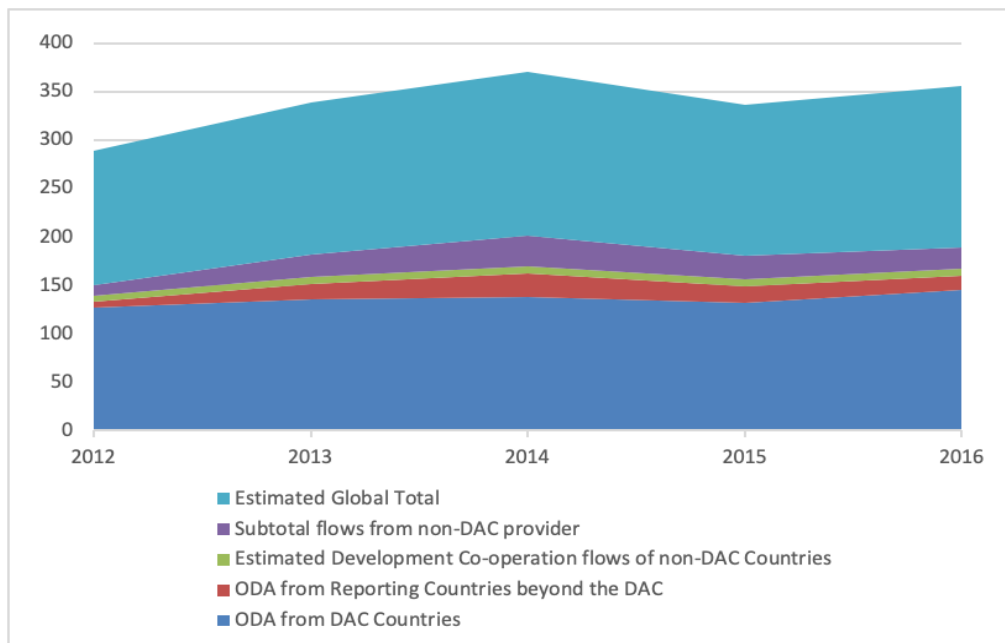
Source: OECD Development Finance Statistics

Figure 3 Net ODA as of GNI of Major DAC Countries (Percent)



Source: OECD Development Finance Statistics

Figure 4 Estimated Global Development Cooperation Flows (2012-2016)
(Current price, USD billion)



Source: OECD Development Finance Statistics

2.2 “Emerging Donor”: China as the Leading Non-DAC Aid Donor

The global market of development assistance is being shaken by the power shift across the global economy.²¹ Non-DAC donors like China, Brazil, and India have invested billions of dollars in other developing countries in recent years. These non-DAC donor countries have played increasingly important roles in financing global development cooperation with a sustained increase in the share of total global development finance (see figure 4). These countries not only contribute to the increase of the total development resource flows but attempt to create new development cooperation modalities called “South-South Cooperation” (SSC). The SSC framework stresses that developing countries can support each other to transfer, adapt, acquire, and pool knowledge to achieve economic growth and poverty reduction.²² Among these non-DAC donors, China has garnered significant international attention because of its rapid domestic economic growth and the expansion of scale and scope of foreign aid activities in the 21st century.

2.2.1 Historical Trend of China’s Foreign Aid

Although China has been described as “emerging donors” in mainstreaming literature, this term may not exactly represent the historical trends and temporal features of China’s foreign aid activities. China has a history as both an aid donor and recipient country after its independence in 1949. Figure 5 presents China’s historical trend of China’s official aid flows to Africa since the 1960s. Based on this long-term trend, the history of China’s external assistance can be approximately divided into three periods: the net donor period before launching the reform and opening-up policy in the 1970s, and the net recipient period during the years with a negative external expenditure, and the period from 1995 to the present, which

²¹ Ngaire Woods, “Whose Aid? Whose Influence? China, Emerging Donors and the Silent Revolution in Development Assistance.” *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November 2008), p. 1205.

²² Piera Tortora, “Common Ground between South-South and North-South Cooperation Principles,” OECD. Last modified October 2011, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/49245423.pdf> (Accessed 3 September 2020).

has spotlighted China's role as an "emerging donor".²³ Prior to the 1970s, China's foreign aid activities were mainly driven by ideological motivation. China provided military and food assistance to the neighboring countries like North Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s and funded large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Tanzania-Zambia railway in the 1970s.²⁴ Though China's approach to foreign assistance does not fit into ODA's definition, China has developed a set of principles of aid delivery that emphasize recipient countries' sovereignty and mutual benefits. These principles established the primary norms and conditions of China's external assistance activities. The emerging donor period indicates that China's foreign aid activities have entered a completely different phase with critical changes in policy objectives and institutional reforms. In accordance with the domestic economic reform and opening-up policies, the provision of foreign aid was no longer solely driven by political motivations but served as a new policy instrument for domestic business firms to advance overseas economic activities.²⁵ Since the 1990s, China started reforming domestic institutions to administer foreign aid projects and launched two policy banks (the Export-Import Bank of China and China Development Bank) as the pillars of China's foreign aid and development finance.²⁶

2.2.2 Gaining International Attention: China's Foreign Aid in the 21st Century

China's foreign aid activities began attracting more international attention when it hosted the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. China's increasing diplomatic and economic engagements in Africa have been considered critical parts of China's growing global reach. China has also shown its pursuit of an international role in global development cooperation through establishing a series of multilateral cooperation framework, including the launch of the Belt and Road and Initiative (BRI), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

²³ Takaai Kobayashi, "Evolution of China's Aid Policy" in JBICI Working Paper No.27. (April 2008), p.3

²⁴ Cheng Cheng, "The Logic Behind China's Foreign Aid Agency," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Last modified May 2019 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/05/21/logic-behind-china-s-foreign-aid-agency-pub-79154> (Accessed September 5, 2020)

²⁵ Kobayashi, "Evolution of China's Aid," 6.

²⁶ Kobayashi, "Evolution of China's Aid," 7.

(AIIB) in 2013, and the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014. The multilateral platforms, together with China's ongoing domestic "Go Global" strategies²⁷ since the late 1990s, have deepened China's development finance engagement with the world, with its foreign aid total increasing at an average rate of 21.8% annually.²⁸

As China has not published detailed and project-level data about its foreign aid activities, some western researchers have committed to collecting publicly available information on China's foreign aid in order to quantify the total volume of China's foreign aid activities. Using media-based tracking methodology, the publication²⁹ based on the *Aid Data's Chinese Official Finance to Africa Dataset*³⁰ provides a quantitative perspective to understand the scale and scope of China's foreign aid activities in the 21st century. The estimated sectoral distribution of China's official financial values of aid projects from 2000 to 2014 (see figure 6) implies that China's current foreign aid projects have strong emphasis on economic and social infrastructure, with "hardware" areas like energy generation, transport taking the lead. Figure 7 further shows that although most of the estimated flow types of China's aid projects are ODA-like.³¹ These ODA-like projects account for a relatively small proportion compared with other types of resources flows over the decades. In addition, the estimated disbursement pattern of flow types of China's development finance is greatly different from that of DAC countries. Figure 8 plots China's "foreign aid" as government budgets and expenditure since 2005 compared to the net ODA of major DAC donor countries. According to figure 8, China's ODA-like flows are relatively small compared with the DAC countries. Though China's ODA-like

²⁷ Emerging in 1999, China's "Going Global" strategy sought to bid farewell to the self-reliance economic model, urging Chinese firms to take advantage of world trade and engage in global market economy.

²⁸ Junyi Zhang, "Chinese Foreign Assistance, Explained," *Brookings Blogs*, Last modified July 19, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/07/19/chinese-foreign-assistance-explained/> (Accessed 19 September 20)

²⁹ Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin M. Strange, and Michael J. Tierney. "Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset." SSRN Electronic Journal, 2017.

³⁰ Aid Data. "Aid Data's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset, 2000-2014, Version.1.0 October 2017." <https://www.aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset> (Accessed 12 October 2020)

³¹ ODA-like is defined for all grants, technical assistance and scholarships, loans with large grant elements, debt relief, and military aid with development intents, including at least 25% concessionally, and have an ODA-eligible recipient as defined by the OECD.

flows seem to have a less significant role in China's overall foreign aid activities based on the estimated results, the scope and scale of China's global development cooperation have continued to increase. In particular, the BRI is having a significant impact on Chinese aid disbursements of developing countries. The BRI now spans around 140 countries (see figure 9) and the BRI-related projects and funds have become an important source of insight on aid by Chinese definition.³² In March 2018, China performed a critical institutional reform by establishing the Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA).³³ This new institution is designed to manage China's international cooperation in a more international and streamlined manner.³⁴

To summarize, China has a long history of providing external assistance. Contemporary China's aid greatly differs that of OECD donors. It combines both ODA-like state finance, commercial investment, and links development benefits for recipient countries with tangible economic benefits for China's State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and private companies.³⁵ Chinese aid is also contrasted with OECD norms for its supposed emphasis on resource extraction, infrastructure, and other productive sectors.³⁶ In an era where the traditional aid and development discourses established by DAC countries and practices of emerging powers like China in global development cooperation are simultaneously reacting and evolving³⁷, China's role as a non-DAC aid donor and its commercial-based development cooperation mechanism have become a topic of interests and debates among many western donor countries. Some acknowledge that China's role as a critical alternative funding source provider for advancing

³² Leah Lynch, "China's Foreign Aid: A Primer for Recipient Countries, Donors, and Aid Providers," *Center for Global Development*. Last modified July 2020. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/chinas-foreign-aid-primer-recipient-countries-donors-and-aid-providers>. (Accessed 3 September 2020).

³³ Marina Rudyak "The Ins and Outs of China's International Development Agency," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/09/02/ins-and-outs-of-china-s-international-development-agency-pub-79739> (Accessed 19 September 2020)

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Deborah Brätigam, "Aid 'with Chinese Characteristics': Chinese Foreign Aid and Development Meet the OECD-DAC Aid Regime." *Journal of International Development* 23 (2011), p. 762.

³⁶ Shuaihua Cheng, Ting Fang, and Hui-Ting Lien. "China's International Aid Policy and Its Implications for Global Governance." SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, (November 1, 2012)

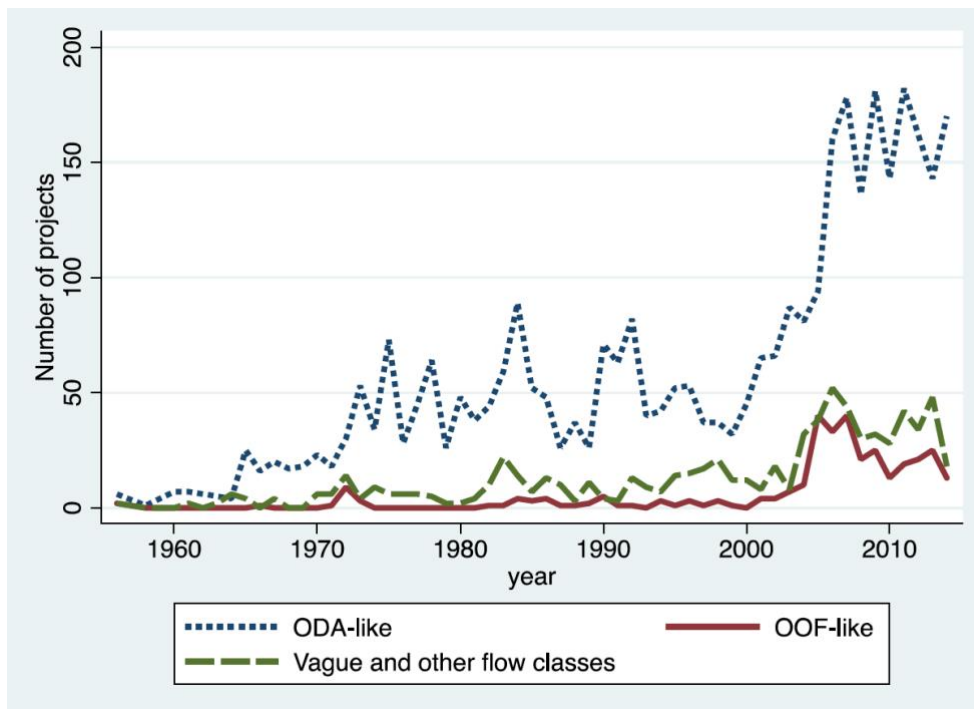
³⁷ Gu, "China's New Silk Road," 2.

development in developing countries, while others hold opposing viewpoints. Some argue that China's aid giving activities are mostly driven by self-interest with an attempt to access natural resources and export domestic laborers.³⁸ Others question whether the provision of China's aid could undermine the roles and good practices of development assistance of DAC countries since China and other non-DAC donors are reluctant to participate in DAC's reporting systems.³⁹ In light of China's prominent appearance as the non-DAC aid donor and a potential institutional player under the international development cooperation mechanism, there has been a consistent need for thorough examinations on the forms and impacts of China's foreign aid for China and western donor countries.

³⁸ Kobayashi, "Evolution of China's Aid," 8.

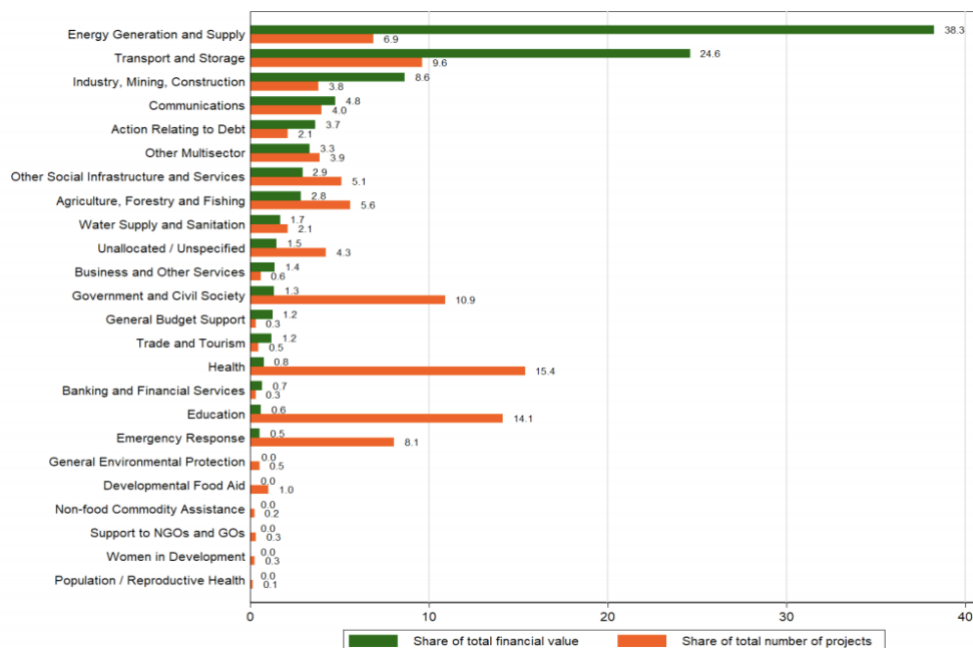
³⁹ Austin M. Strange, Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, and Michael J. Tierney. "Tracking Underreported Financial Flows: China's Development Finance and the Aid–Conflict Nexus Revisited." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 5 (May 2017), p.3

Figure 5 Long-Term Trend of Chinese Finance Commitments to Africa (1956-2014)



Source: Pipa Morgan, Yu Zheng. “Old bottle new wine? The evolution of China’s aid in Africa 1956-2014.” *Third World Quarterly* (2018): 1293, fig.4⁴⁰

Figure 6 China's Sectoral Distribution by Financial Value and Project (2000-2014)



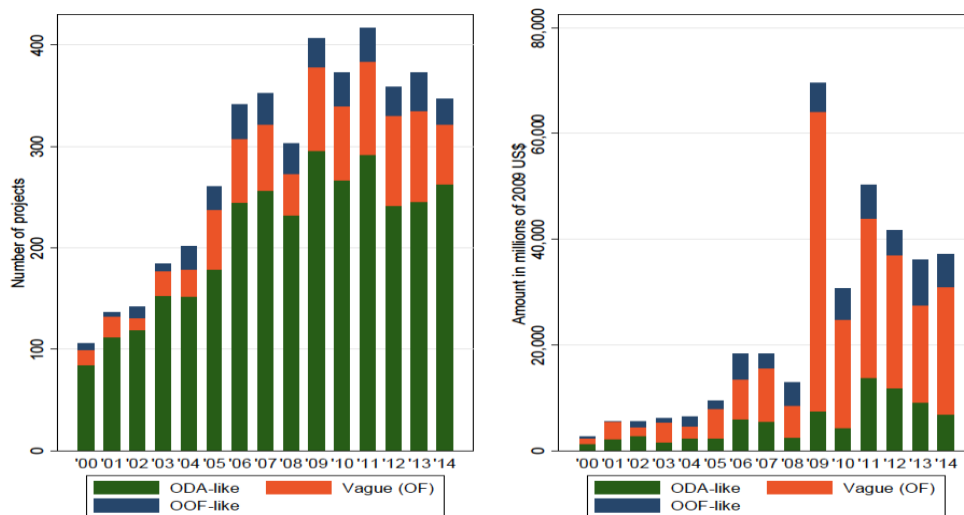
⁴⁰ ODA-like (See Footnote 31)

Other Official Flow (OOF-like) refers to commercial or representational loans that include less than 25% concessionality level. OOF-like flow includes export credits. This category is aligned with the OECD-DAC 2014-2015 Directives.

Vague Official Finance (OF) refers to projects that are neither ODA nor OOF, but for which information is not sufficient to assign projects to one category or another.

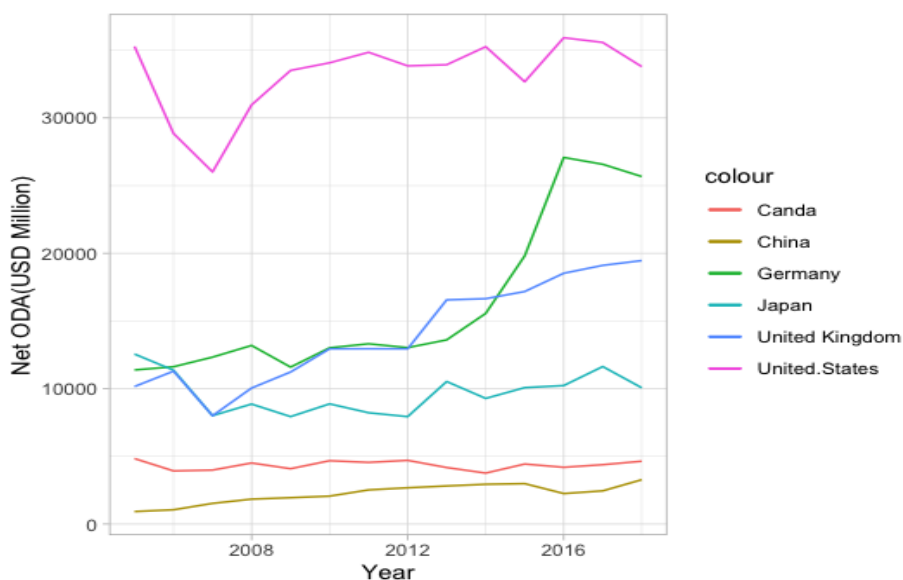
Source: Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin M. Strange, and Michael J. Tierney. "Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset." SSRN Electronic Journal (2017): 44 fig.3

Figure 7 Variation in Flow Types of China's Development Finance (2000-2014)



Source: Dreher, et al., "Aid, China and Growth," (2017): 43 fig.2

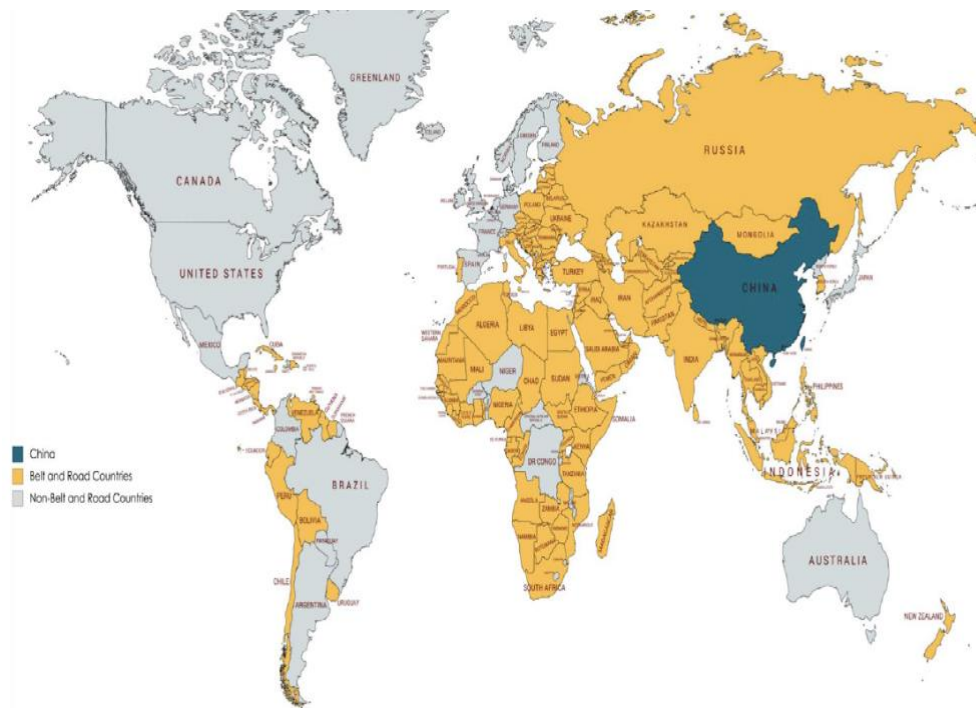
Figure 8 China's ODA-like flows vs. Net ODA of Major DAC Countries (2005-2018)



Source: OECD Development Finance Statistics
China Africa Research Institute⁴¹

⁴¹ China Africa Research Initiative, "Data: Chinese Foreign Aid to Africa" <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-foreign-aid-to-africa> (Accessed August 26, 2020).

Figure 9 Countries that have signed a MOU on the BRI with China



Source: Leah Lynch, “China’s Foreign Aid: A Primer for Recipient Countries, Donors, and Aid Providers,” *Center for Global Development*. (July 2020): 11, fig.8

3. Literature Review

China’s growing importance as a non-DAC donor of development assistance is of particular concern among policymakers from western donor countries. Some claim that Chinese aid could destabilize the international aid architecture as increasing donor competition grants developing countries the opportunity to “shop around” for the development finance that best suits their interest.⁴² Mainstream western narratives on China’s aid program always portray China as a new challenge to the conventional DAC aid, driven by China’s rising economic clout and intended to win benefits for Chinese firms and the Chinese economy.⁴³ The most prevalent “rogue donor” narrative claims that Chinese aid is unrelated to the need of developing countries and the provision of Chinese aid has undermined the development effort

⁴² Austin et al., “Tracking underreported financial flows,” 3.

⁴³ Pippa Morgan and Yu Zheng, “Old bottle new wine? The evolution of China’s aid in Africa 1956-2014” *Third World Quarterly*. 40(7), (2019), p.1297.

of Western donors to promote good governance in the developing world.⁴⁴ Apart from harsh criticisms on China's motive of aid-giving activities, more specific concerns are focused on a series of political and socioeconomic consequences of China's foreign aid in the recipient countries, ranging from democratization, conflicts and violence, to economic development, debt sustainability, and environmental outcomes.⁴⁵

Scholars have shown increasing research interest in exploring characteristics, impacts, and roles of China's foreign aid activities from different research perspectives. China's rising international prominence in Africa after the turn of the century has sparked a number of works broad dynamics in Sino-Africa relations as well as that focus specifically on Chinese aid, investment in Africa, advancing a small body of pre-twenty-first century work on Chinese aid.⁴⁶ However, some western scholars have noticed that the popular accounts on China's contemporary foreign aid activities are often devoid of historical context and instead emphasize China's emergence as a prominent aid donor since 2000.⁴⁷ Differing from negative narratives among political commentators, recent studies suggest that most western scholars present nuanced and mixed outlooks on China's contemporary foreign aid activities when incorporating historical and recent evidence.

Since China is one of the non-DAC donors who is not subject to DAC aid reporting system, most scholars are interested in the characteristics of China's aid. Specific research questions include: (1) what are the types and total volume of finance flows? (2) how does China frame its policies and principles of aid delivery? Studies include: (1) describe China's aid approaches based on interpretation of China's official policy paper of foreign assistance and government

⁴⁴ Axel Dreher and Andreas Fuchs, "Rogue aid? An empirical analysis of China's aid allocation," *Canadian Journal of Economics* 48, no. 3 (August 2015): 988-1023.

⁴⁵ Austin et al., "Tracking underreported financial flows," 4.

⁴⁶ Morgan and Zheng, "Old bottle new wine," 1287.

⁴⁷ Austin Strange, "Seven Decades of Chinese State Financing in Africa: Tempering Current Debates," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 34, no. 3 (September 2, 2019), p. 259.

expenditures data;⁴⁸ (2) develop proxy definitions of China's aid flows⁴⁹ and estimate the aggregated volume and categorize different types of resource flows using China's government expenditure data or tracking the unreported financial flows;⁵⁰ (3) analyze China's domestic agencies, bureaucratic institutions and other subnational actors to figure out how China's domestic decision-making process affects the design and delivery of aid programs.⁵¹ Studies from these perspectives help to summarize some key characteristics of China's aid.

The implementation models of China's development project and its impacts on recipient countries are also of research interest to some scholars. Scholars intend to figure out how China's development projects are implemented and how these projects exert impacts on the recipient countries. Studies mainly include: (1) conduct case studies to summarize the development project modalities at recipient countries' level,⁵² explore what are the key stakeholders involved in China's infrastructure projects and how these projects are financed, designed and implemented;⁵³ (2) explore the socioeconomic impacts of China's development projects on recipient countries using empirical research design, including examining the impacts on economic growths and poverty reduction⁵⁴, regional inequalities⁵⁵, debt risk.⁵⁶ These studies examine the relationship between China and recipient countries and provide evaluations of China's development programs.

Many western scholars prefer to explore how China's approach to aid delivery affects DAC countries. Studies from this perspective mainly investigate the relationship between

⁴⁸ See Xue, "China's Foreign Aid Policy and Architecture," (July 2014): 36-45

⁴⁹ See Sears, "What Counts as Foreign Aid," (January 2019): 135-44

⁵⁰ See Kitano, "China's Foreign Aid," (January 2, 2018): 90-111.

See Dreher, et al., "Aid, China and Growth," (2017): 1-50

⁵¹ See Zhang and Smith, "China's Foreign Aid System," (October 2017): 2330-46.

See Varrall, "China's View on China's Role," (June 2013): 233-55.

See Warmerdam and Haan, "The Dialectics of China's Foreign Aid," (December 2015): 617-48.

⁵² See Weng et al., "Will China Redefine Development Patterns in Africa," (July 2017): 506-12.

⁵³ See Corkin, "Chinese Construction Companies in Angola," (December 2012): 475-83; Jiang, "Competitive Partners in Development Financing," (September 2019): 778-08.

⁵⁴ See Dreher et al., "Aid, China, and Growth," (2017); Chan, "For Richer, for Poorer," (2015)

⁵⁵ See Bluhm et al., "Connective Financing: Chinese Infrastructure Projects," (2018)

⁵⁶ See Brautigam and Hwang, "Eastern Promises: New Data on Chinese Loans in Africa," (April 2016)

China and the western donor countries. These studies include: (1) compare the definition of ODA and China's development finance to find out conceptual differences;⁵⁷ (2) conduct empirical research to investigate how the emergence of China's development aid affects the governance and practice of DAC countries in recipient countries;⁵⁸ (3) assess claims and criticisms on China's aid approaches and discuss how China's engagement in global development cooperation will change the existing multilateral development assistance regimes.⁵⁹

To recapitulate, scholars have contributed to clarifying key characteristics of China's foreign aid activities and examining a series of impacts and implications of China's aid flows and practice from different viewpoints. However, there are still some gaps in understanding the features, roles, and impacts of China's foreign aid. First, although several western scholars have done excellent work in developing proxy definition and quantifying the aggregate volume of China's aid projects through collecting publicly available information, the definitions on the flow types of China's foreign aid are not clear enough. Similar terms like "China's aid", "China's state finance", "China's external assistance" have been used interchangeably without explicit clarification in some contexts of debate. Second, since western scholars are more interested in the question like "how China's affects DAC's development norms and practice", their research perspectives are mostly derived from the past debates on aid and development theories from DAC countries. Nevertheless, western scholars' research perspective may neglect other significant aspects of China's foreign aid as China has its own rules and principles of aid delivery. Lastly, though this section includes a few English journal articles published by Chinese scholars, it does not present a holistic review on the state of debates among Chinese scholars with publications in Chinese. Some western scholars have indicated that because of

⁵⁷ See Bräutigam, "Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics'," (2011): 752-64.

⁵⁸ See Li, "Does Conditionality Still Work?" (2017): 201-20.

⁵⁹ See Woods, "Whose Aid? Whose Influence?" (2008): 1205-21.

the language gaps, western scholars primarily rely on publications and literature from the Global North, while this does not “do justice to the Chinese view on how the West views and presents Chinese aid vis-à-vis OECD donors.”⁶⁰ Some Chinese scholars have also noted that communication and collaboration between Chinese and international policy researchers and practitioners on studies of China’s foreign aid have been limited.⁶¹ Language barriers and the lack of communication have contributed to a knowledge gap and a deficit of understanding among different stakeholders.

4. Research Questions

As discussed in the previous section, though the current state of academic debate on China’s foreign aid is productive, some research gaps still exist, including the unclarified definition and different conceptualization of China’s aid resource flow, the relative limitation of reconciling western aid and development theories to evaluate China’s aid. In particular, the lack of communication between Chinese and international researchers is of notable research interests for this paper. Building on the existing studies on China’s foreign aid from western and Chinese scholars in recent years, this paper develops the following research questions:

1. What are the most recent issues and concepts on China’s foreign aid that have been respectively or collaboratively explored by Western and Chinese scholars?
2. Are there any similarities or differences in their research focus, methodologies, key arguments, and findings?
3. Whether and to what extent that Chinese and Western scholars hold different views on the impacts of China’s foreign aid?

⁶⁰ Sears, “What Counts as Foreign Aid,” 141.

⁶¹ Gu, “China’s New Silk Road,” 2.

4.1 Research Objectives

This paper intends to address these research questions by synthesizing the most recent research output on China's foreign aid from western scholars and Chinese scholars. Using a mix-method synthesis approach (see section 5.2), this paper aims to synthesize the existing evidence from similar research perspectives and comparing Chinese and Western scholars' viewpoints. In so doing, this paper attempts to systematically present and compare the state of debate on China's foreign aid in Chinese and English literature. In line with the research questions listed above, this paper develops three research objectives to help guide the research design in section 5.2, including:

1. To select reliable and representative research outputs that include explicit discussions on China's foreign aid in English and Chinese academic database and other reliable resource.
2. To explore the concepts and criticisms on China's foreign aid that have been developed by western and Chinese scholars through condensing categories, themes and quantifiable codes based on predefined coding schemes.
3. To find and compare different viewpoints from western and Chinese scholars through classifying and grouping themes, categories, and codes by references in different languages.

4.2 Scope of the Research

Building on the research questions and objectives, this paper clarifies two general limitations of this paper. First, as discussed in section 2.2, it is necessary to specify the time when discussing the motivation and evolution of China's foreign aid activities. Many recent studies on China's foreign aid have emphasized that China has moved toward the commercial-oriented aid modalities. This paper focuses on review articles that include explicit discussion on contemporary China's foreign aid activities since 2000. Therefore, this paper sets the time from 2005 to 2020 as the primary entry criteria for selecting articles. Though not all articles published during this period only focus on examining contemporary China's foreign aid, the

specification of time entails a broad representation of literature and requires a longer latency time for reaching the audience and minimizes the selection bias. Second, since this paper mostly adopts descriptive and qualitative methodologies when collecting, generating and analyzing data, the generalizability of findings is not an expected attribute for qualitative research. However, assessment of generalizability has become increasingly pertinent in qualitative studies, especially for research synthesis.⁶² Discussions on the validity and reliability of this paper will be fully illustrated in section 5.4.

5. Research Approach

This section begins with an introduction to the recent state of debate on the methodologies used in this paper, including systematic review, content analysis and thematic analysis (see section 5.1). Throughout the examination of the methodological debates, this paper outlines the research design and analytical roadmaps (see section 5.2) to address the research questions.

5.1 Methodologies

5.1.1 Research Synthesis

Systematic Review

The traditional literature review typically involves a review of the literature on a given topic to understand the state of debate to a specific research question. It helps researchers have preliminary assessments of the existing literature quickly, while such a convenient process has several notable shortcomings. First, there will be a selection bias as reviewers often select studies at hand⁶³, which means reviewers may draw conclusions from a non-representative sample.⁶⁴ Second, reviewers rarely adopt a predefined approach to assessing the evidence, and

⁶² Lawrence Leung, "Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 4, no. 3 (2015): 324–27.

⁶³ Jessica Hagen-Zanker and Richard Mallett, "How to Do a Rigorous, Evidence- Focused Literature Review in International Development," (September 2013) <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8572.pdf>

⁶⁴ Mark Peticrew and Helen Roberts, *Systematic Review in the Social Science: A Practical Guide*. (2006)

mostly focus on examining the research designs and dataset's interpretations.⁶⁵ Third, the final product of traditional literature reviews may not represent trustworthy products as the data extractions and review process are carried out in a non-transparent way.⁶⁶

Studies across different disciplines are cluttered with repeated studies of the same phenomena.⁶⁷ Researchers may simultaneously investigate similar research questions or test the same hypothesis from different research perspectives. Replications of literature can either contribute to the diversification of research outputs or bring about research bias when results across a number of studies are rarely identified at any high level of precision.⁶⁸ Whether and how to respond to the difference in the existing studies becomes a problem for researchers. As traditional literature reviews have methodological limitations when it comes to finding and explaining the variations across different studies, systematic review emerges as a rigorous and transparent form of method to synthesize different types of evidence. By definition, a traditional literature review includes a process of seeking out, sifting through, reading, appraising and describing relevant research evidence, while a systematic review involves performing a predefined and rigorous data extraction process from individual research studies, interpreting and representing the final results in a collective form.⁶⁹ The general stages of a systematic review on quantitative studies typically include: (1) formulating a problem for a research synthesis; (2) searching the literature; (3) evaluating study methodology and extracting information from study reports; (4) statistically describing and combining study outcomes; (5) interpreting and presenting results.⁷⁰

Systematic review has a series of advantages as a well-established and rigorous research method. It can help generate new knowledge, bring different academic and non-academic

⁶⁵ Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, "Do a rigorous and evidence-focused," 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Harris Cooper, Larry V. Hedges, and Jeffrey C. Valentine, *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis* 3rd edition., New York: Russell Sage Foundation (2019), p.4.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey C. Valentine et al., "Replication in Prevention Science," *Prevention Science* 12, no. 2 (May 4, 2011), p.103.

⁶⁹ Cooper et al., *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*, 6.

⁷⁰ Cooper et al., *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*, 12-15.

forms of knowledge and evidence, and evaluate the conceptual relevance of different studies.⁷¹

It has been considerably advanced in many disciplines (such as psychology, education, health science, and social policies analysis) over the past 20 years.⁷²

5.1.2 Qualitative Descriptive Methodologies

Qualitative Research Synthesis

Statistical inference and meta-analytical techniques have given rise to an increasing appreciation for the systematic reviews on primary quantitative studies. Many published meta-analyses were shown to contribute many benefits, such as assessing empirical evidence and generating theory. By contrast, methods for systematically reviewing qualitative research are still emerging and under ongoing development and debate.⁷³

Similar to the logic of quantitative research synthesis, qualitative evidence synthesis can be also defined as the amalgamation of qualitative research reports that related to a specific research topic. It also aims at achieving a new or enhanced understanding of the phenomenon under study.⁷⁴ Qualitative evidence synthesis often entails a narrative or interpretative process by which ‘the constituent study texts can be treated as the multivocal interpretation of a phenomenon’⁷⁵. A synthesis of qualitative studies can help researchers to refute or revise the current understanding of a particular phenomenon. Considerable methodological works have been carried out to fit the general principle of synthesis into qualitative studies. Despite a variety of methods, one of the challenges remains for qualitative research is that there are still no agreed-upon methods for conducting qualitative research.⁷⁶ Scholars have explicated that

⁷¹ Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, “Do a rigorous and evidence-focused,” 4.

⁷² Cooper et al., “*The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*,” 8.

⁷³ R Campbell et al., “Evaluating Meta-Ethnography: Systematic Analysis and Synthesis of Qualitative Research,” *Health Technology Assessment* 15, no. 43 (December 2011): 1-6.

⁷⁴ Barbara L. Paterson, “‘It Looks Great but How Do I Know If It Fits?’: An Introduction to Meta-Synthesis Research,” in *Synthesizing Qualitative Research* (February 2012), p.1.

⁷⁵ Lela Zimmer, “Qualitative Meta-Synthesis: A Question of Dialoguing with Texts,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 53, no. 3 (2006): 311–18.

⁷⁶ James Thomas and Angela Harden, “Methods for the Thematic Synthesis of Qualitative Research in Systematic Reviews,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (July 10, 2008), p.2.

there has been a considerable overlap among available qualitative approaches in terms of methods, procedures, and techniques.⁷⁷ Researchers must determine which research approach can best answer their research questions.

Content analysis vs. Thematic Analysis

Content analysis is a general term in describing different strategies used to analyze text. It is a systematic coding and categorizing approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of words used, frequencies, relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication.⁷⁸ Coding categories can be either determined by a theoretical framework such as program theory or developed by several people with adequately defined and mutually exclusive criteria.⁷⁹ Content analysis has a notable advantage in that it can synthesize data from both quantitative and qualitative studies.⁸⁰ It is possible to analyze data qualitatively and simultaneously quantify the data.⁸¹ As an aggregative synthesis method, content analysis might be most appropriately applied to descriptive data, like project documents or surveys.⁸² The limitations may include that content analysis could inherently reduce and trends to diminish the complexity and context.⁸³ However, if applied prudently, content analysis can be a very useful method for quantifying qualitative evidence and synthesizing a large number of studies.

⁷⁷ Vaismoradi, Mojtaba, Hannele Turunen, and Terese Bondas. "Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study." *Nursing & Health Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2013), p.398.

⁷⁸ Mayring P. Qualitative Content Analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2000; 1: Article 20. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/issue/archive> (Accessed 9 September 2020)

⁷⁹ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 1, 2005): 1277–88.

⁸⁰ Pope Catherine, Mays Nicholas, and Popay Jennie, *Synthesising Qualitative and Quantitative Health Evidence: A Guide to Methods: A Guide to Methods*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. (2007): 79-89.

⁸¹ Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (1st edn). London: Sage Publications (2007)

⁸² Birte Snilstveit, Sandy Oliver, and Martina Vojtkova, "Narrative Approaches to Systematic Review and Synthesis of Evidence for International Development Policy and Practice," *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2012), p.416.

⁸³ Mary Dixon-Woods et al., "Synthesising Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence: A Review of Possible Methods," *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2005), p.50.

Similar to content analysis, thematic analysis is also described as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and themes within data.⁸⁴ Thematic analysis has similarities and complementarities with content analysis. Both the two approaches aim at analytically examining narrative materials by breaking the text into relatively small units of content and transforming them into descriptive treatment.⁸⁵ Both approaches are suitable for qualitative evidence synthesis, while the choice of methods depends on the research context. If the exploratory work in a research field was less well known, content analysis might be suitable for the simple reporting of common issues mentioned in data.⁸⁶ By contrast, thematic analysis can provide a purely qualitative, detailed and nuanced account of data.⁸⁷

5.1.3 Summary

To sum up, the general goal of a systematic review is to bring together all existing research studies focused on specific research studies focused on a specific question or intervention as a shortcut to the literature and generate new insights from the existing research.⁸⁸ Depending on the types of evidence, there are many methods to formulate, interpret and report the synthesis. Methodological debates on synthesis approaches to different types of evidence in specific research fields are still well underway. When the general principles and synthesis approaches are applied cautiously, systematic review has strong advantages over traditional literature reviews.

⁸⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 77–101

⁸⁵ Sparker A. Narrative analysis: exploring the whats and hows of personal stories. In: Holloway I (ed.). *Qualitative Research in Health Care* Berkshire: Open University Press (2005): 191–208.

⁸⁶ Judith Green and Nicki Thorogood, "Analyzing Qualitative Data." *Qualitative Methods for Health Research* (1st edn). London: Sage Publication. (2004): 173-200.

⁸⁷ Braun and Clarke, "Using thematic analysis," 77-101.

⁸⁸ Angela Harden, "Mixed-Methods Systematic Reviews: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings," no. 25 (2010): 1-8. https://ktdrr.org/ktdrr/library/articles_pubs/ncddrwork/focus/focus25/Focus25.pdf. p.2.

5.2 Research Design

A Mixed-Methods Synthesis Approach

In the realm of social science studies, different approaches to research synthesis have been increasingly applied in international development to examine the impact of development and humanitarian interventions.⁸⁹ In particular, the focus on evidence-based policy in international development gives rise to funding and production of rigorous impact evaluation and systematic reviews.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, experience with applying the methodology in the field of international development has also highlighted the need to adapt the method to be a useful tool for informing policy and practice. Because many research fields of social science are multi-disciplinary fields in nature, it may be much harder to assess evidence compared to the fields in which systematic reviews were pioneered.⁹¹

Reviewers often face several practical challenges. First, a rigorous systematic review often requires reviewers accessing a wide range of databases and peer-reviewed journals to ensure the breadth of the systematic reviews. Lacking access to reliable academic databases is a very practical challenge for reviewers. Second, unlike natural and medical science, social science studies are not written in a uniform fashion. It is never easy to assess the evidence “objectively” in social science studies⁹², which makes the determination of inclusion and exclusion criteria even harder. Third, as most studies include more than one type of evidence, the choice of proper synthesis approach also raises critical methodological concerns for reviewers.

Given the practical challenges and methodological concerns, some social science scholars suggest that a proper research synthesis approach for social science studies should involve a mixture of compliance and flexibility: compliance with the broad systematic review principles,

⁸⁹ Richard Mallett et al., “The Benefits and Challenges of Using Systematic Reviews in International Development Research,” *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2012), p. 445.

⁹⁰ Birte Snilstveit, “Systematic Reviews: From ‘Bare Bones’ Reviews to Policy Relevance,” *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2012), p.396.

⁹¹ Mallett et al., “The Benefits and Challenges of Using Systematic Reviews,” 450-452.

⁹² Ibid.

and flexibility to tailor the process towards improving the quality of the overall finding.⁹³ This paper agrees that it is necessary to adjust some of the systematic review principles to address the research questions better. This paper's research design gets inspiration from *Mixed-Methods Systematic Reviews: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings* by Angela Harden.⁹⁴ Harden summarizes the rationales for combining qualitative and quantitative findings in the same review including: (1) the types of studies in the review are mixed, the types of findings are mixed; (2) the synthesis methods used in the review are mixed; (3) the review uses two modes of analysis: theory building and theory testing. The rationales of mixed-method approaches can be moderately applied in this paper for the following reasons: (1) The traditional literature review has suggested a mixed type of studies on China's foreign aid, such as descriptive case study, qualitative field research, and empirical studies; (2) As discussed in 5.1.2, content analysis and thematic analysis are both suitable and complementary for exploring and synthesizing qualitative research. By theoretical definition, a quantitative content analysis can provide the trends, patterns, and frequencies of key issues and concepts of China's foreign aid. Qualitative thematic analysis can present the detailed interpretations of similar or different viewpoints between Chinese scholars and western scholars. (3) The combination of the results of analysis can be further integrated for further discussions and implications.

Table 1 provides the overview of the mixed-method review process in line with the research objectives and procedures of synthesis approaches. Apart from the two synthesis approaches discussed above, this paper will fully utilize data and information in the process of literature selection to conduct a simple descriptive bibliometric analysis in addressing the first research objective. The following subsections in this chapter will further elaborate the details of the review process.

⁹³ Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, "Do a rigorous and evidence-focused," 5.

⁹⁴ Harden, "Mixed-Methods Systematic Reviews: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings," 1-8.

Table 1 Overview of the Review Process

Research Objectives	Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis And Quantitative Content Analysis	Qualitative Thematic Analysis
1. To select reliable and representative research outputs on ‘China’s Foreign Aid’ in English and Chinese primary research studies	- Identify eligible studies based on predefined searching strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria.	- Familiarize with content - Generate initial codes and collate data relevant to each code
2. To find and explore the topics, concepts and controversies of China’s foreign aid	- Find and compare publication time trends, disciplines, and research methods and summarize the descriptive characteristics. - Develop codes, themes and categories for key concepts and issues - Calculate the frequency of key codes, - Record the frequency of themes and codes	- Collate codes into potential themes and group data under the themes - Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells - Generate clear definition and names for each theme
3. To compare different arguments and perspectives from Chinese scholars and western scholars	- Conduct and report numeric analysis of themes and codes	- Report the analysis process through conceptual maps or categories

5.2.1 Search Strategies

Bibliographic databases are the most efficient way to identify a set of potentially relevant studies that have been published as journal articles. This paper adopts several search techniques to include research of high qualities as possible. These techniques include: (1) a conventional subject search on representative databases; (2) a rapid reference list checking that included paper identified through conventional subject search; (3) a comparison process by comparing

the previous search results from the traditional literature review in this paper. Conventional subject search can help to identify the majority of references, but additional search techniques were essential and located further high-quality references.⁹⁵ A full systematic search will be conducted to entail search strategy around terms and logic search operators for advanced search. As this paper includes published articles both in English and Chinese, the search process will be conducted separately in different journal databases.

In order to select the eligible English articles, the paper begins by first performing multiple keyword searches in the following databases: (1) ProQuest Politics Collection (Including access to PAIS index, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, (2) International Bibliography of Social Science covers social science and interdisciplinary research and (3) JSTOR Security Studies. The first set of search terms was designed to locate any articles that include the term “China’s Foreign Aid” anywhere in the record. The second search of articles uses a set of key terms that allow complex search strings, including applying the Boolean Operators (“AND” “OR” “NOT”) based on the predefined logic representation map (see figure 10). The conventional subject search results will be firstly examined based on eligibility criteria as defined in 5.2.2.

As for the selection of Chinese articles, the paper searches China’s largest journal database, *China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (CNKI). This paper also retrieves journal articles from CNKI’s Chinese Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI) source journals and Chinese core journals to include articles of high research qualities.

5.2.2 Eligibility Criteria

The journal database provides the most effective filters for inclusion and exclusion criteria. For the English literature, this paper includes “peer-reviewed scholarly journals” and “key

⁹⁵ Diana Papaioannou et al., “Literature Searching for Social Science Systematic Reviews: Consideration of a Range of Search Techniques,” *Health Information & Libraries Journal* 27, no. 2 (2010): 114–22.

working paper” and excluded “general information”, “commentary”, and “literature review”. For the Chinese literature, this paper excludes “master and doctoral degree dissertation”, “conference report”, and “media reports”. The time period of publication has predefined in 4.2 covers from 2005 to 2020. As indicated in the literature review (see chapter 3), China’s public discourse, western and Chinese scholars often use a variety of terms when discussing “China’s foreign aid”, which suggest a linkage between aid, trade, investment and other economic cooperation. This implies that discussions on “China’s foreign aid” is inevitably bundled with a couple of concepts that need to be clarified. Figure 10 outlines the logic representation of key terms that can help guide the conventional subject search, advanced search, and abstract screening process to finally determine the eligibility of the articles. As indicated in figure 10, the solid circle represents the total literature of interest. The broadest conceptual boundary is “China’s development cooperation”. The most inner dash line circle is the most frequently used term “China’s foreign aid” in line with a couple terms that specify aid activities, such as “development finance”, “development projects”. The choices of terms are based on China’s official definition of foreign aid and DAC glossary of key terms and concepts. This inner circle represents the most relevant terms. The rest two dash-line circles “Economic Cooperation” and “International Development Cooperation” intend to capture the overlapping conceptual areas.

Using this logic representation map, this paper applies the following search terms strategies in English journal database: (1) abstract (China’s foreign aid OR China’s Development Aid), include (feature OR articles), exclude (General information AND Conference Proceeding AND report); (2) for the specific subject: include (China AND Foreign Aid OR Economic Development OR International Cooperation OR Economic Growth). This paper employs the term ‘*zhongguo duiwai yuanzhu*’ (“中国” 与 “对外援助” ‘China’ AND ‘foreign aid’) for conventional subject search in Chinese journal databases and applies the equivalent inclusion and exclusion criteria in Chinese.

After finishing the conventional and advanced searching process, this paper collects the primary sample of the eligible studies for this paper. The exclusion criteria will be applied in three stages. First, duplicated articles will be excluded to avoid repetition. Second, when doing abstract screening, articles that do not have clear concept clarification and focal discussion on the research topic will also be excluded. Third, articles that do not include have strong implications for the research topic will be excluded from the sample. The process of exclusion will stop when the paper finishes developing the primary qualitative themes and codes for synthesis analysis. Using PRISM diagram flow (see figure 11), the paper identifies 92 eligible articles for the review questions, including 61 English articles and 31 Chinese articles. These articles will be re-classified into two broad categories as “articles from Non-Chinese Scholars” and “articles from Chinese Scholars” based on the ethnic origins, countries or regions of the first author’s institutional affiliations. To summarize, this paper includes 48 research articles from Chinese scholars and 44 research articles from non-Chinese scholars. (For the full bibliographic information, see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.)

Figure 10 Logic Representation of Key Term Search and Inclusion Criteria

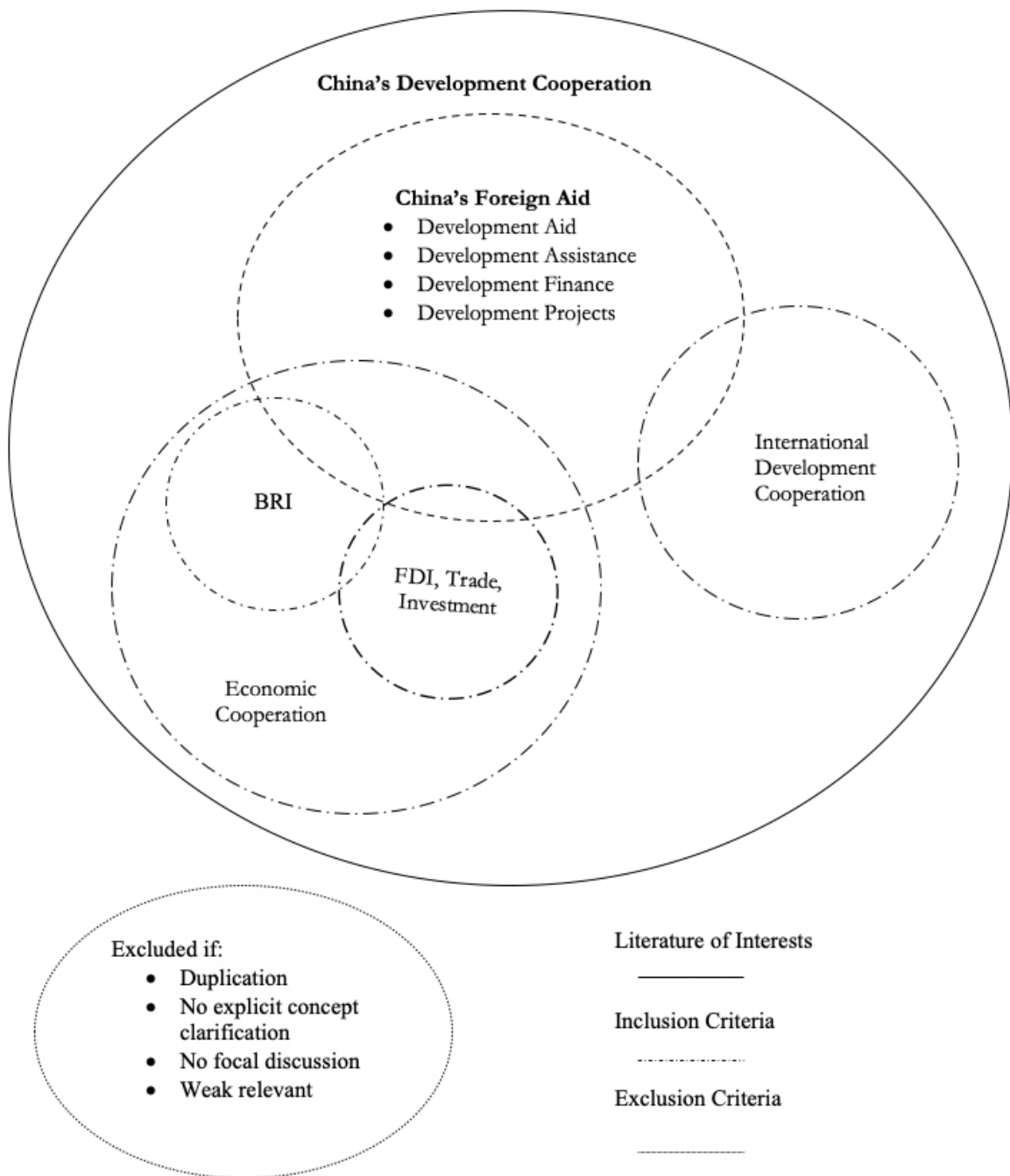
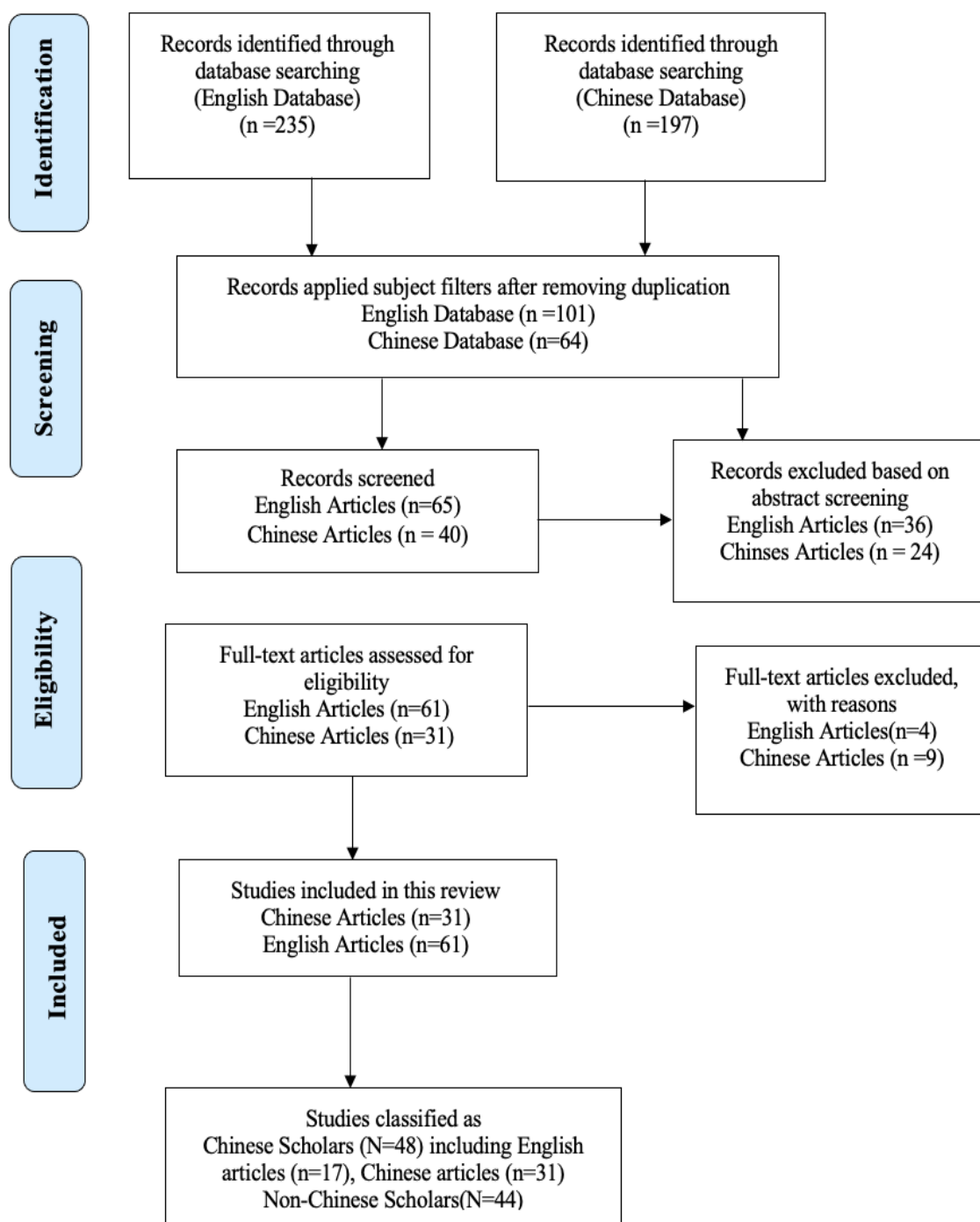


Figure 11 The PRISM Flow Diagram



Source of Template: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group. "Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement" 2009. *PLoS Med* 6(7): e1000097.

5.2.3 Data Extraction and Synthesis Approach

Table 2 presents the template for data extraction following the methodological requirement of the review process. The first step is to provide a descriptive bibliometric analysis based on the search results from the conventional database search. This process includes collecting a series of raw bibliographic information such as years of publication, key subjects. The raw data will be collected and generated as quantitative data, such as the time-series publication trend of articles, frequency of key subjects. The data extraction and analysis tools include pivot tables and descriptive statistics functions in Excel. The second and third steps all require having text data coded into explicit categories and quantifiable codes. Since no previous studies have dealt with this paper's review question, the coding strategy of inductive content analysis is preferred. The coded categories and themes will be derived directly from the text data.⁹⁶ The raw data will be transformed into both quantifiable codes and qualitative themes for further analysis.

As discussed in section 5.1, the choice of synthesis approach depends on a series of factors, such as the questions and purpose of the synthesis, the nature of evidence, time, and resource. The methodologies of synthesis are on a continuum from aggregative approaches at one end to interpretive synthesis methods at the other (see Figure 12)⁹⁷. Depending on the nature of the review question is to explore and conceptualize issues, configurative synthesis is preferred in this paper.⁹⁸ Content analysis and thematic analysis are both approaches of configurative synthesis. While due to the advantages of content analysis as being a quantitative and qualitative methodology, the aggregated synthesis (quantitative content analysis) can also be properly conducted. The synthesis approaches include tabulations, graphs of frequency counts of codes and interpretation of the qualitative themes of patterns. The paper uses NVivo 12 (the mainstreaming qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software) as the data extraction

⁹⁶ Hsieh and Shannon. "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," 368-73.

⁹⁷ Snilstveit, et al., "Narrative Approaches to Systematic Review," 416.

⁹⁸ Thomas, J., Harden, A., and Newman, M., "Synthesis: combining results systematically and appropriately. In: D. Gough, S. Oliver, and J. Thomas, eds. *An introduction to systematic reviews*". (2012). London: Sage, 179–226.

and synthesis tool. Figure 13 presents the flow diagrams of the data generating process and synthesis approaches in line with the review questions of this paper.

5.2.4 Limitations

Reliability

Because of researchers' human nature, coding errors can never be eliminated but only minimized.⁹⁹ This paper follows the following three most frequently used criteria¹⁰⁰ of inter-coder reliability in the coding process, including (1) consistently re-coding the texts in the same way over a period of time to ensure the stability of coders; (2) classifying categories membership in the same way to achieve the reproducibility; (3) always clarifying and comparing new codes with the existing codes to make sure coders are mutually exhaustive.

Validity

Validity is of vital importance when it comes to the interpretation of the coding schemes. This paper considers the three criteria¹⁰¹ of validity in the interpretation process, including (1) always keeping the review questions in line with the identification of codes to realize the closeness of categories; (2) correctly making implications from the data to avoid improper interpretations; (3) considering the limitation of coders and cautiously determining the level of generalizability of final results.

⁹⁹ Columbia Public Health, "Content Analysis Method and Examples," (Accessed November 24, 2020) <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/population-health-methods/content-analysis>.

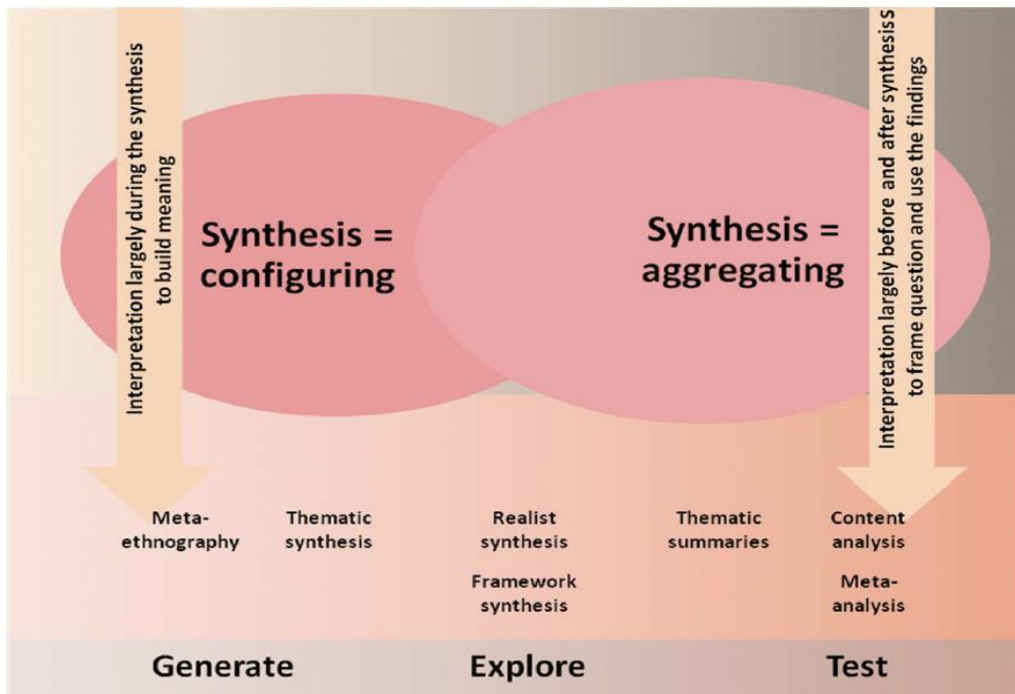
¹⁰⁰ W. James Potter and Deborah Levine-Donnerstein, "Rethinking Validity and Reliability in Content Analysis," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 27, no. 3 (August 1, 1999): 258–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889909365539>.

¹⁰¹ Columbia Public Health, (Accessed November 24, 2020)

Table 2 Data Extraction Template

The Review Process	Types of Data	Methods of Collation
Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis	Authors' Name Article Title Years of Publication Subjects	Use pivot table and graph function in Excel to generate descriptive statistics information
Quantitative Content Analysis	Author's Affiliation Texts that include: (1) Research Design (2) Conceptual exploration discussion (3) Findings and Arguments	Use Nvivo.12 to develop codes and memos to generate codebooks and conceptual maps
Qualitative Thematic Analysis	Texts that include: (1) Conceptual Exploration and discussion (2) Findings and Arguments	Use Nvivo.12 to develop codes and generate memos

Figure 12 Methodological Continuum of Synthesis Approaches and Methods



Source: Birte Snilstveit, Sandy Oliver, and Martina Vojtkova, "Narrative Approaches to Systematic Review and Synthesis of Evidence for International Development Policy and Practice," *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 4, no. 3, 416, fig.1

6. Findings: Contextualizing the State of Debate of “China’s Foreign Aid”

6.1 Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis

This section provides a descriptive bibliometric analysis to find the general characteristics of the recent publications on China’s Foreign Aid. It includes an analysis of research subjects and publication trends based on the key term’s literature search. It further presents a characteristics’ description of the eligible studies included in this paper. In so doing, it intends to present a macro-concept mapping and primary assessments on studies on China’s Foreign Aid in recent years. It first includes all articles that explicitly contain the key searching term “China’s foreign aid” (in the English databases) and “zhongguo duiwai yuanzhu” (“中国对外援助” in the Chinese journal databases) in their abstracts for the analysis of research subjects and publication trends. It then uses built-in filters in the journal database in line with the inclusion criteria developed in section 5.2 (see figure 10) to figure out eligible studies and extract the relevant bibliometric information.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize and compare the top ten key research subjects from the studies on China’s Foreign Aid in English and Chinese. The frequency of subjects is calculated from the number of articles that include the subjects divided by the total number of articles based on key terms’ search. In light of the frequency distribution of the research subjects, there are several implications to be made. First, we find that the term “China’s foreign aid” (33.8% of Chinese articles) and “China’s aid” (34.5% of English articles) are the most commonly used and referenced. The term “economic development” (23.4% of English articles) and “Cooperation” (12.7% of English articles) is also frequently referenced in English literature. However, terms like “economic development” or “Cooperation” should be considered as broader conceptual categories that include but are not limited to China’s aid flows and projects. In this sense, we may conclude that the fuzziness of the term “China’s Foreign Aid” is particularly reflected in academic debates among non-English scholars. Second, we learn that

China's aid allocation to the African continent has received substantial research attention as terms like "Africa" (13.2% of English articles) and "Aid to Africa" (9.5%) are also usually referenced. The geographic focus also implies that Africa has remained and will continue as a focus of China's contemporary foreign policy objectives and aid disbursement strategies. African countries have received approximately 60% of Chinese aid flows and projects since 2000.¹⁰² Third, terms like "foreign policy" (17.8% of English articles) and "foreign aid policies" (5.59% of Chinese articles) imply that debates on China's aid are inseparable from the examination of China's domestic politics. Last, we also find that it seems that only some Chinese scholars contribute to the discussion on combining "Belt and Road Initiative" (2.8% of Chinese Articles) and China's foreign aid strategies. This result is contrary to expectation given that the research background finds that the BRI may have significant impacts on Chinese aid disbursements and other development cooperation.

As figure 14 indicates, the publication trends of Chinese and English literature on China's foreign aid share the similar patterns from 2005 to 2014 with the highest number of research outputs occurring in 2014. In particular, the number of Chinese publications has increased since 2014, while the number of English publications experiences a downward trend by contrast. The changing publication patterns can reflect recent transformations of China's foreign aid policies. In 2011 and 2014, the office of China's state council published the *White Paper of China's Foreign Aid (2011)*¹⁰³ and the *White Paper of China's Foreign Aid (2014)*¹⁰⁴ in succession. The two policy documents (both have the official English version) provided the official definitions, principle, and norms on China's foreign aid and included aggregated data and sectoral allocations of financial resources and development projects. The publicly available

¹⁰² Strange, "Seven Decades of Chinese State Financing," 269.

¹⁰³ The State Council of People's Republic of China, "China's Foreign Aid (2011)," (Accessed October 20, 2020) http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284620.htm.

¹⁰⁴ The State Council of People's Republic of China, "China's Foreign Aid (2014)," (Accessed October 20, 2020) http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986592.htm

information helps Chinese and non-Chinese scholars understand, interpret and evaluate China's foreign aid policies, which could presumably explain the two peaks of the publication trends in 2011 and 2014.

**Table 3 Frequency of Research Subjects based on Key Terms' Search
Chinese Literature 2005-2020 (N=235)**

Research Subjects	Number of Articles	Frequency
Foreign aid (“对外援助”)	171	47.8%
China's foreign aid (“中国对外援助”)	121	33.8%
Aid to recipient countries (“受援国援助”)	89	24.9%
Aid to Africa (“对非援助”)	34	9.5%
ODA	20	5.6%
Foreign aid policy (“对外援助政策”)	15	4.2%
Development Assistance (“发展援助”)	12	3.3%
Belt and Road Initiatives (“一带一路倡议”)	10	2.8%
National Interest (“国家利益”)	10	2.8%
South-South Cooperation (“南南合作”)	9	2.5%

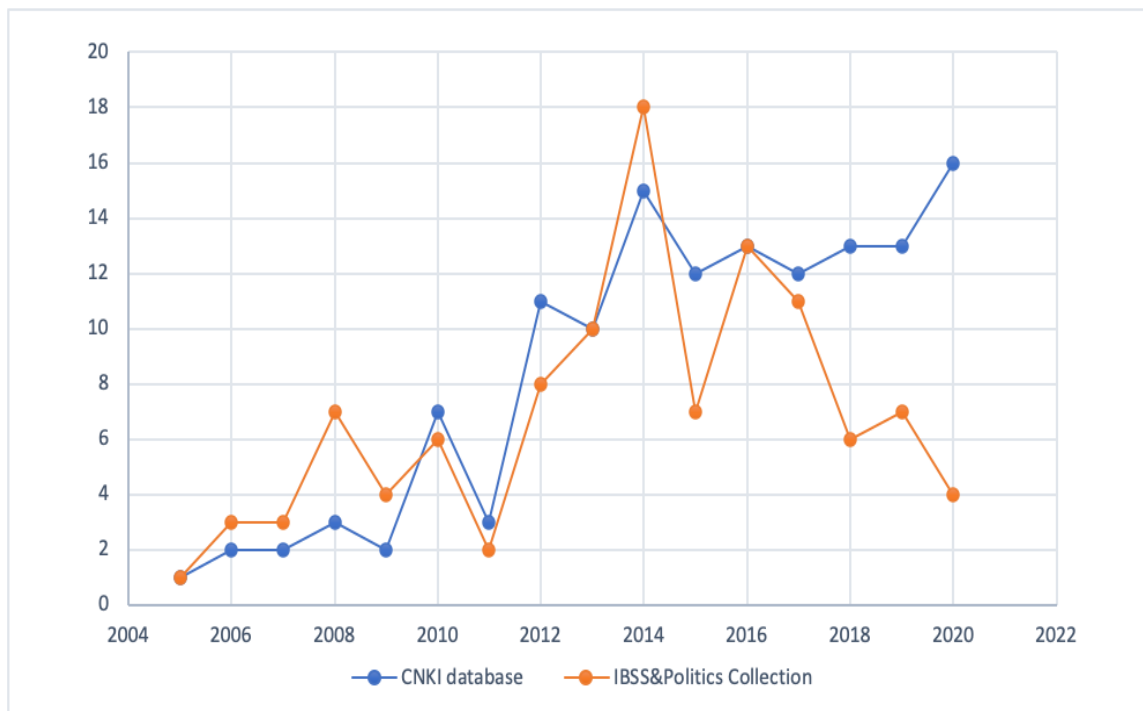
Source: CNKI (Accessed 10 September 2020)

**Table 4 Frequency of Research Subjects based on Key Term's Search
English Literature 2005-2020 (N=197)**

Research Subjects	Number of Articles	Frequency
China's Aid	68	34.5%
Foreign Aid	64	32.5%
Economic Development	46	23.4%
Foreign Policy	35	17.8%
International Relations	35	17.8%
Africa	26	13.2%
Cooperation	25	12.7%
Diplomacy	25	12.7%
Development Projects	16	8.1%
International Cooperation	16	8.1%

Source: ProQuest Politics Collection (Accessed 10 September 2020)

Figure 14 Publication Trend of Articles included “China’s Foreign Aid” in Abstract (2005-2020)



Source: CNKI, ProQuest IBSS

(Accessed 10 September 2020)

Table 5 shows the descriptive characteristics of the eligible studies included in this review. Similar to the publication trend in figure 14, both the number of English and Chinese articles have seen an increase in this sample. About 84% of the articles were published after 2014. The research location settings are assigned based on the first author’s institutional affiliation. The majority of English articles come from Europe (32.8%), followed by China (23%), North America (14.8%), and Australia (13.1%). Some scholars from the DAC countries in Asia like Japan and South Korea¹⁰⁵ also contribute to the current research on China’s foreign aid activities. There are a relatively small number of studies from developing countries, including 8.20% of publications from Africa and some from Southeast Asia¹⁰⁶. As this paper includes a

¹⁰⁵ See Kitano, “China’s Foreign Aid at a Transitional Stage,” (2014): 301–17.

See Lee, “The Belt and Road Initiative: Impact on Trade Patterns,” (December 2018): 195-98.

¹⁰⁶ See Trinidad, “Institutional Mismatch and Chinese Aid in the Philippines,” (June 2016): 299–32.

See Furuoka, “Determinants of China’s and Japan’s Foreign Aid,” (September 2017): 376–88.

number of articles in Chinese, studies from China have the largest proportion of the whole sample (48.9%). The snapshot of the geographic setting of literature has several implications: (1) Scholars from the Global North (Europe, North America, Australia) take the lead of the debate in the English-speaking academics. (2) A fair number of Chinese scholars have published English articles either by translating their Chinese research output into English or collaborating with scholars from western research institutions. In this sample, most English articles by Chinese scholars were published after 2014 (about 23% out of the total English articles). (3) Though studies from developing countries (like countries in Africa and Southeast Asia) account for the smallest share (less than 10%) of the total sample, these research projects still provide valuable evidence and viewpoints of the recipient countries.

The research methods that scholars used are reviewed based on four broad categories: (1) quantitative research; (2) qualitative research; (3) descriptive case study; (4) comparative studies. Classification of the four categories is based on the quick review of the types of data, theoretical frameworks, and research designs included in the articles. Descriptive case studies are the most frequent applied research methods (about 60% in the whole sample and sub-samples). These studies often use publicly available information and official data sources in combination with theoretical frameworks to describe the implementation modes of development projects, the decision-making process of China's aid policies, or impact analysis of China's aid on traditional donors' countries and recipient countries. A few quantitative studies (23.9%) have also appeared due to the recent substantial efforts to track, collect and establish China's foreign aid database at country-level. These empirical studies test a series of popular hypotheses such as the determinants of China's aid allocation¹⁰⁷, aid-development

See Harpaz, "China's Coherence in International Economic Governance," (2016): 123-147

¹⁰⁷ See Furuoka, "Determinants of China's and Japan's Foreign Aid," (September 2017): 376-88.

nexus¹⁰⁸, and aid-conflict nexuses.¹⁰⁹ By contrast, the proportion of qualitative studies like field research or interviews is relatively small (13.04% in the whole sample, and only 6.45% in Chinese literature). Many of the qualitative studies provide valuable qualitative data source and context-specific analysis of China’s aid projects.

Table 5 Descriptive Characteristics: Eligible Studies on “China’s Foreign Aid” included in this Review (N=92)

Characteristics	All Articles (N=92)		English Articles (N=61)		Chinese Articles (N=31)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Publication Date</i>						
2000-2005	15	16.3%	10	16.4%	5	16.3%
2011-2015	29	31.5%	19	31.1%	10	32.2%
2015-2020	48	52.2%	32	52.5%	16	51.2%
<i>Research Location (Country or Region)</i>						
Africa	5	5.4%	5	8.2%		
Australia	8	8.7%	8	13.1%		
Asia	6	7.6%	5	8.2%		
China	45	48.9%	14	23%	31	100%
Europe	20	23.9%	20	33%		
North America	9	10.9%	9	14.8%		
<i>Types of Studies</i>						
Quantitative Research	20	23.9%	14	23%	6	19.4%
Qualitative Research	11	13%	9	14.8%	2	6.5%
Descriptive Case	55	65.2%	34	55.7%	21	67.7%
Comparative Study	6	6.5%	4	6.6%	2	6.5%

¹⁰⁸ See Dreher et al., “Aid, China, and Growth,” (2017)

See Dreher and Fuchs, “Rogue aid? An empirical analysis,” (August 2015): 988-1023.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

6.2 Quantitative Content Analysis

Concepts and Claims: Non-Chinese Scholars vs. Chinese Scholars

This section presents the numeric analysis of themes and codes developed from the key concepts and claims discussed in the eligible articles. The articles are firstly coded in four parent nodes in NVivo 12: (1) definition of China's foreign aid; (2) motivations of China's foreign aid; (3) implementation modes of China's aid projects; (4) impacts of China's foreign aid activities. The four parent nodes also serve as the four primary themes for qualitative thematic analysis in section 6.3. The coding schemes and determination of hierarchy relationships between child nodes and parent nodes are developed according to the review questions. Coding frameworks are also adjusted while reviewing the articles (see Appendix-3 and Appendix-4).

Tables 6 and 7 show the summary statistics of the files and references. Frequencies are calculated from the number of child nodes divided by the parent nodes. The two tables also present similarities and differences in concepts and claims examined by non-Chinese scholars and Chinese scholars. First, the comparison of the frequency distribution of the four parent nodes from the two samples (see figure 15) reveals that both non-Chinese (41% of the total references) and Chinese scholars (52.2% of the total references) have substantially explored the impacts of China's foreign aid. Scholars mainly develop their research from the perspective of donor countries. Non-Chinese scholars remain skeptical about the impacts of China's aid-giving activities. The majority of the references (93.9%) on "impacts on DAC countries" point out problems of China's aid-giving practices and argue that China's aid has threatened the DAC aid effectiveness regimes (31.2% references) and development norms (15.2% references). In contrast, Chinese scholars' investigation on the "impacts on traditional donors" (23% references on "international impact") is less than that of "domestic impacts" (70.3% references on "impacts") and "impacts of on recipient countries" (77.1% references on "international

impact”). Most Chinese scholars have very critical viewpoints on China’s aid. The proportion of “self-reflections” (78.9% references on “domestic impact”) accounts for most of the references discussing domestic impacts of China’s aid. Similar to the concerns raised by non-Chinese scholars, Chinese scholars also point out that China’s current aid data reporting system lacks “transparency” (10.8% references on “self-reflection”). They also suggest that China does not establish effective “regulation” (12.7% references on “self-reflection”) to manage the design and delivery of aid projects. In terms of the impacts on recipient countries, figure 16 compares similar concepts from the two samples under the same parent node. It can be learned that Chinese scholars emphasize the economic impacts (41% references on “recipient impacts”) and the issue of “local labor participation” (21.3% references). Non-Chinese scholars are more concerned about how China’s aid influences the “institutions and governance” (31.1% references) of the recipient countries.

Second, non-Chinese and Chinese scholars both provide interpretations and evaluations on the official definition of China’s aid. Non-Chinese scholars have made substantial efforts in developing “proxy definition” (22% references on “definition”) and categorizing “types of flows” (26.4% references on “definition”), while Chinese scholars put more emphasis on the narrative interpretations of “principles” (86.3% references on “definition”). Though many Chinese scholars have noted that the increase of “multilateral cooperation” (20.4% references on “self-reflection”) will be one of the most important transformations of China’s aid policies, few of them think that China should follow DAC’s norms and standards. Instead, Chinese scholars believe that China should continue to develop its own “norms of development” (33% references on “principles”).

Third, scholars both identify “economic interest” (42.9% references on “motivations” from non-Chinese scholars and 35.7% references from Chinese scholars) and “political interest” (57.1% references from Non-Chinese scholars and 52.9% references from Chinese scholars).

There is a slight difference in terms of the interpretation of motivation among Chinese scholars. A few Chinese scholars argue that China's aid is driven by "humanitarianism" (11.4% reference "motivation"). The humanitarian motivations are described as financial resources "used to help recipient countries 'cope unexpected events and emergencies, alleviate the fortunate situation of backward countries and save lives'"¹¹⁰ or claims like "Chinese people make a great sacrifice to help the developing countries."¹¹¹ By contrast, there seems little discussion on China's aid related to humanitarian motivation among non-Chinese scholars writing in English.

Last, scholars are all interested in how Chinese aid projects are designed and delivered by different "institutions and actors" (50.9% references on "implementation modes" from non-Chinese scholars) and "project management" (65.6% references on "implementation modes" from Chinese scholars). Non-Chinese scholars mainly focus on the role of China's central government in aid project design, while Chinese scholars provide detailed examinations on the role of sub-national actors in aid project implementation, such as provincial governments (59.3% references on "project management"). Scholars have different thematic focuses when investigating China's aid projects. Most non-Chinese scholars focus on the examination of China's infrastructure project, while Chinese scholars include more case studies on China's aid projects in social sectors, such as agriculture (32.3% reference on "thematic focus"), health (32.3% references on "thematic focus").

¹¹⁰ Huang, M. B., & Tang, L. P. *nannan hezuo yu zhongguo duiwai yuanzhu* [South-south cooperation and China's foreign aid]. *guoji jingji hezuo* [Journal of International Economic Cooperation], (5), 66–71.

¹¹¹ Yang, Hongxi, Chen, Kaiming. 杨鸿玺 陈开明 "Zhongguo duiwaiyuanzhu: chengjiu, jiaoxun yu liangxingfazhan" 中国对外援助：成就，教训，与良性发展 [China's Foreign Aid: Achievements, Lessons, and Benign Development]. *Guoji zhanwang* 国际展望, vol.1, (2010): 46-56.

Table 6 Brief Summary Statistics of Coding Scheme (Non-Chinese Scholars N=48)

Themes/Codes	Files (N=48)	References (N=690)	Frequency
1. Definition (Parent Node)	34	182	26.4%
<i>1.1 Principles</i>	28	94	51.7%
1.1.1 BRI	4	17	18.1%
1.1.2 Mutual Benefit	3	3	3.2%
1.1.3 Non-Conditionality	11	15	16%
1.1.4 Non-Interference	4	6	6.4%
1.1.5 South-South Cooperation	14	51	54.3%
<i>1.2 Proxy Definition</i>	12	40	22%
<i>1.3 Types of Resources Flows</i>	15	48	26.4%
2. Motivations (Parent Node)	24	98	14.2%
<i>2.1 Economic Interest</i>	16	42	42.9%
2.1.1 Domestic Demand	10	20	47.6%
2.2.2 Natural Resource	12	21	50%
<i>2.2 Political Interest</i>	19	56	57.1%
2.2.1 Diplomatic Interest	13	29	51.8%
2.2.2 Ideology	3	9	16.1%
2.2.3 Soft Power	8	16	28.6%
3. Implementation Modes (Parent Node)	26	127	18.4%
3.1 Efficient Delivery	3	4	3.2%
3.2 For-Profit	2	3	2.4%
3.3 Institution and Actors	12	64	50.4%
3.4 Project Management	11	42	33.1%
3.5 Request-based	3	3	2.4%
3.6 Thematic Focus	8	11	8.7%
4. Impacts (Parent Node)	43	283	41%
<i>4.1 Impacts on DAC Countries</i>	31	147	51.9%
4.1.1 Threats to DAC Aid Regime and Norms	30	138	93.9%
a. DAC Development Norm	13	43	31.2%
b. DAC Aid Effectiveness Regime	5	21	15.2%
c. Social Responsibility	3	4	2.9%
d. Tied Aid	6	12	8.7%
e. Rogue Aid	13	29	19.7%
f. Transparency	9	14	9.5%
4.1.2 Cooperation	3	4	2.7%
4.1.3 Self-Reflection	5	6	4.1%
4.1.4 Geopolitical Competition	4	5	3.4%
<i>4.2 Impacts on Recipient Countries</i>	27	106	37.5%
4.2.1 Alternative Model	12	19	17.9%
4.2.2 Conflict and Repression	4	17	16%
4.2.3 Debt Sustainability	3	11	10.4%
4.2.4 Economic Growth	8	15	14.2%
4.2.5 Institution and Governance	10	33	31.1%
4.2.6 Local Participation	5	6	5.7%

Table 7 Brief Summary Statistics of Coding Scheme (Chinese Scholars N=44)

Themes/Codes	Files (N=44)	References (N=539)	Frequency
1. Definition (Parent Node)	27	95	17.6%
<i>1.1 Principles</i>	25	82	86.3%
1.1.1 BRI	2	10	12.2%
1.1.2 China's Development Norm	8	27	32.4%
1.1.3 Mutual Benefit	10	14	17.1%
1.1.4 Non-Conditionality	2	2	2.4%
1.1.5 Recipient's Needs	6	6	7.3%
<i>1.2 South-South Cooperation</i>	14	23	28.1%
<i>1.3 Types of Resources Flows</i>	6	13	13.7%
2. Motivations (Parent Node)	21	70	13%
2.1 Economic Interest	11	25	35.7%
2.2 Humanitarianism	5	8	11.4%
2.3 Political Interest	16	37	52.9%
3. Implementation Modes (Parent Node)	19	90	16.7%
<i>3.1 Project Management</i>	11	59	65.6%
3.1.1 Central Decision-Making Body	7	32	52.2%
3.1.2 Decentralized Implementation	8	27	45.8%
a. SOEs	2	2	7.4%
b. International Organizations	1	4	14.8%
c. Private Companies	2	5	18.5%
d. Provincial Institution	4	16	59.3%
<i>3.2 Thematic Focus</i>	10	31	34.3%
3.2.1 Agriculture	3	10	32.3%
3.2.2 Education	4	6	19.4%
3.2.3 Health	2	10	32.3%
3.2.4 Infrastructure	2	3	9.7%
3.2.5 Technology Transfer	1	2	6.5%
4. Impacts (Parent Node)	39	283	52.2%
<i>4.1 Domestic Impacts</i>	33	199	70.3%
4.1.1 Domestic Economic Growth	6	20	10.1%
4.1.2 Global Image	7	15	7.5%
4.1.3 Public Opinion	5	7	3.5%
4.1.4 Self-Reflection	29	157	78.9%
a. Administration	8	27	17.2%
b. Aid Dependency	1	2	1.3%
c. Cultural Integration	3	21	13.4%
d. Human Resource	5	9	5.7%
e. Multilateral Cooperation	7	32	20.4%
f. Non-state Actor Participation	10	19	12.1%
g. Regulation	9	20	12.7%
h. State Budget Capacity	6	10	6.4%
i. Transparency	10	17	10.8%
<i>4.2 International Impacts</i>	15	60	21.3%
4.2.1 Economic Growth	10	47	77.1%
a. Local Governance	2	3	6.4%

b. Resource Exploitation	1	6	12.8%
c. Labor Participation	2	10	21.3%
d. Social Welfare	2	9	19.2%
e. Trade, Investment, and Infrastructure	6	19	40.4%
4.2.2 Impacts on Traditional Donor	6	14	23%

Figure 15 Comparison of Themes: Definition, Motivation, Implementation and Impacts

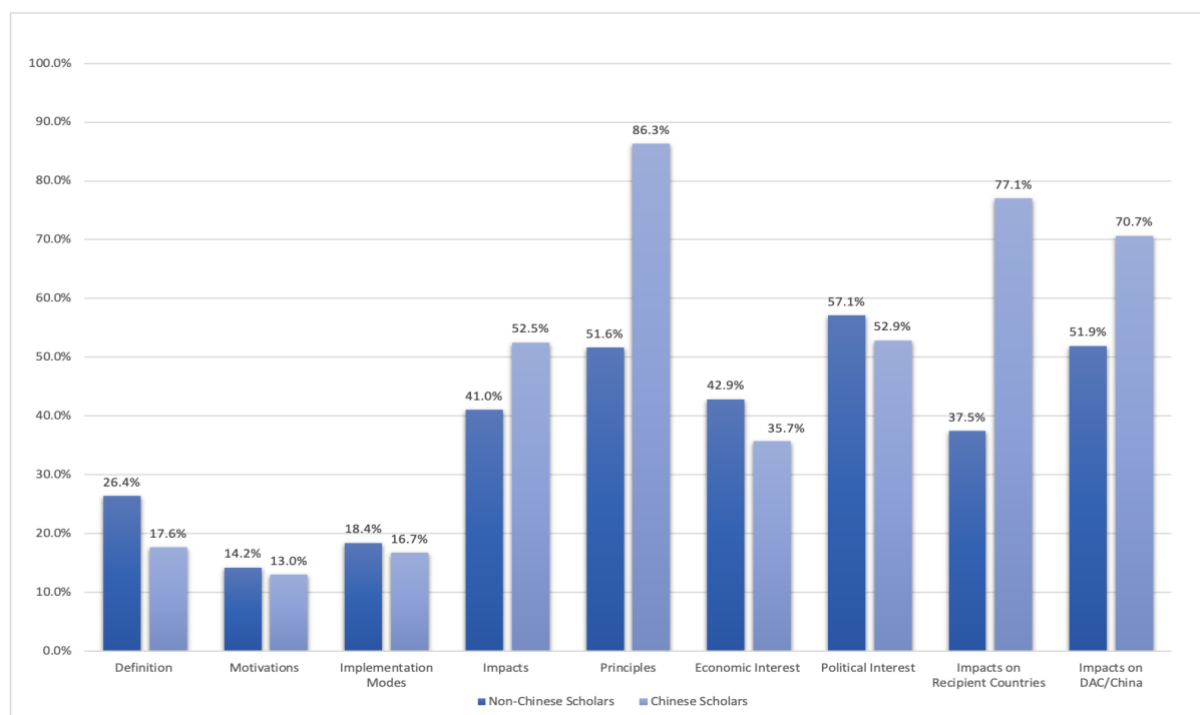
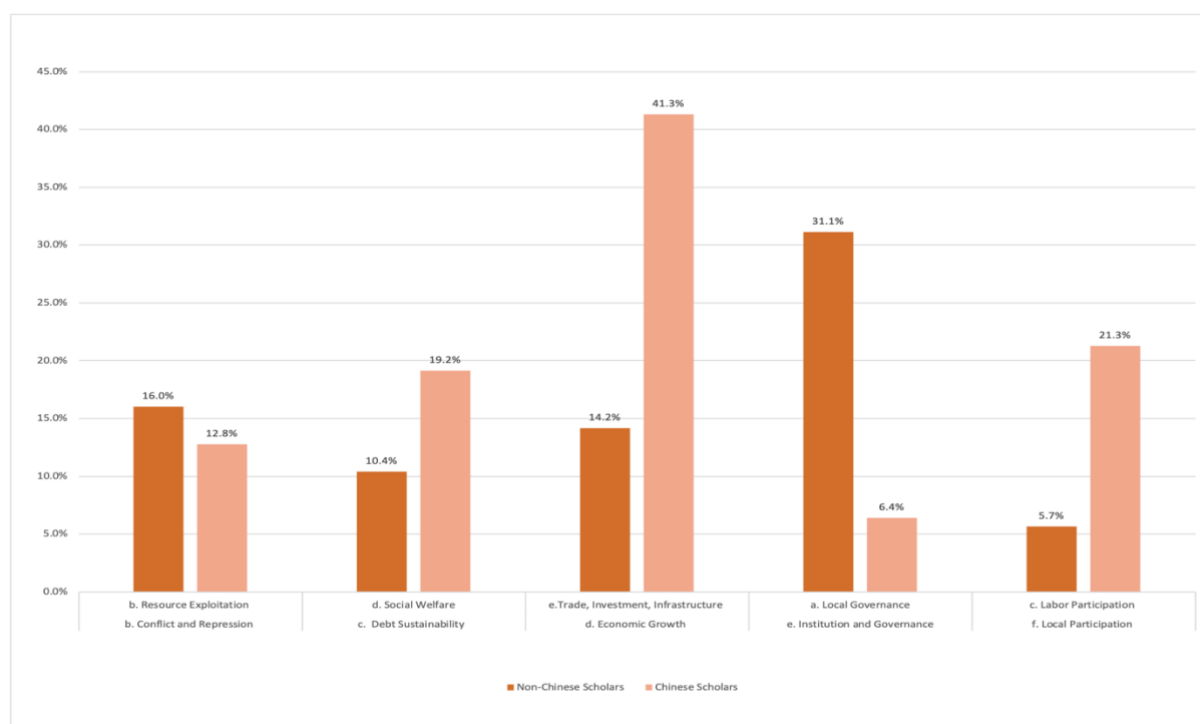


Figure 16 Comparison of Concepts: Impacts on Recipient Countries



6.3 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

The formulation of quantifiable codes in the earlier section helps present and generalize some of the similarities and differences in the research outputs between non-Chinese and Chinese scholars. Nevertheless, numeric analysis may discard valuable qualitative information. Building upon the previous analysis results, this section conducts an interpretative synthesis under the same review questions. The four themes are framed as specific review questions as follows.

6.3.1 Agreed-upon Problematic Quantification on China's Foreign Aid

How scholars define and measure China's foreign aid flows

As discussed in section 6.2, quantifying China's foreign aid resource flows remains one of the key research interests for many non-Chinese scholars. *China's Foreign Aid 2011* and *China's Foreign Aid 2014* are the most frequently cited official documents in journal articles regardless of the language in that the two papers provide the official definition of aid, the principles of delivery, types of development projects, and geographical allocations of aid. Nevertheless, since China has neither developed national statistical measurement tools nor established database to track the detailed finance flows, non-Chinese scholars criticize that China's unwillingness to publish detailed data has not only limited the empirical investigations of researchers but also lead to a perception of secrecy and suspicion.¹¹² Non-Chinese scholars have developed a series of individual research projects¹¹³ and collaboration projects¹¹⁴ that focus on quantifying China's foreign aid in the 21st century. The most well-known collaborative research project is the Aid Data¹¹⁵ project that tracks China's aid project data from 2000 to 2014. Most empirical studies included in this review use Aid Data as major data

¹¹² See Strange, "Seven Decades of Chinese State Financing," (September 2019): 259-79.

See Dreher and Fuchs, "Rogue Aid," (2015): 988-1023.

¹¹³ See Bräutigam, "Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics,'" (July 1, 2011): 752-64.

See Kitano, "China's Foreign Aid at a Transitional Stage," (2014): 301-17.

See Sears, "What Counts as Foreign Aid," (2019): 135-44.

¹¹⁴ See Strange et al., "Tracking Underreported Financial Flows," (May 2017): 935-63.

¹¹⁵ Aid Data, "China Research by Aid Data," (Accessed October 26, 2020), <https://www.aiddata.org/china>.

source.¹¹⁶ There seems to be a minimal research focus on categorizing or quantifying the financial resource flows among Chinese scholars. Debates among Chinese scholars on the definition of foreign aid are highly interpretive, mainly including direct textual interpretations of the official documents on China's aid policies.¹¹⁷

Both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars have highlighted that the lack of reliable data sources of China's aid has strong implications for transparency issues. Scholars also list reasons to explain why it remains challenging to define and measure China's foreign aid properly. First, many Chinese scholars point out that the issue of transparency is largely due to the regulatory gaps and ad hoc administrations.¹¹⁸ Though China has drafted proposed regulations in recent years, such as *Measures for the Administration of Foreign Aid Draft*,¹¹⁹ China does not pass any foreign aid laws or regulations to plan and manage the aid projects. Second, non-Chinese scholars note that the issue of transparency is common among many emerging donors like China as they are not subject to the DAC reporting system.¹²⁰ There are also some discussions on "should China follow the ODA compliance."¹²¹ Non-Chinese scholars have agreed that China's aid flows in the 21st century are very different from the DAC countries¹²² in that it represents a complicated and mixed funding mechanism. China's aid flows often have blur boundaries between state-budget-based grants, investment and commercial projects. Therefore, it is hard to make accurate classification of projects and separate "aid" from other forms of

¹¹⁶ See Furuoka, "Determinants of China's and Japan's Foreign Aid," (September 2017): 376–88.

See Pang and Wang, "The International Political Significance of Chinese and US Foreign Aid," (January 2018): 5-33.

¹¹⁷ See Zhou, "China's Foreign Aid: Achievements, Lessons, and Benign Development," (2010): 3-11.

See Ren, "Interpreting China's Foreign Aid: A Preliminary Theoretical Analysis," (2016): 155-163.

See Jiang, "Modernization, National Security and Foreign Aid," (2019): 121-54.

¹¹⁸ See Huang, "The Mechanism of China's Foreign Aid," (2007): 4-11.

See Huang, "Domestic Politics and China's Health Aid," (2014): 176-98.

See Li, "China's Humanitarian Aid: Characteristics and Challenge," (2012): 48-54.

¹¹⁹ "CIDCA Issues Measures for the Administration of Foreign Aid Draft," *China Aid Blog* (blog), Last modified November 20, 2018, <http://china-aid-blog.com/2018/11/20/cidca-issues-measures-for-the-administration-of-foreign-aid-draft/>.

¹²⁰ See Kiala, "China–Angola Aid Relations," (December 2010): 313-31.

¹²¹ See Sears, "What Counts as Foreign Aid," (2019): 135-44.

¹²² See Bräutigam, "Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics'," (July 1, 2011): 752-64; See Strange, "Seven Decades of Chinese State Financing," (September 2, 2019): 259-79.

cooperation engagement.¹²³ In addition, China's investment and commercial projects are often contradicted with ODA's notion of "concessional" and "development" as these projects are implemented by SOEs and private companies with strong business intentions. Non-Chinese scholars often find it challenging to examine whether or to what extent that ODA's definition and measurement methodology can be reconciled to measure China's aid.¹²⁴

Thematic Syntheses

- The lack of reliable data source of China's foreign aid implies that both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars have agreed upon China's aid transparency issues.
- Non-Chinese scholars are more concerned about the statistical measurement of China's aid. They highlight that China's aid represents a complicated funding and implementation mechanism, which makes it difficult to classify different types of funds and projects correctly.
- Scholars point out several challenges of defining and measuring China's aid. Chinese scholars suggest that it is due to the gaps in regulations and administration, while non-Chinese scholars hold critical views on China's commercial-based projects and find it hard to reconcile these projects to the DAC reporting system.

6.3.2 Different Opinions on the Motivations of China's Foreign Aid

How scholars interpret the motivations of China's foreign aid

As stated in section 6.2, both non-Chinese and Chinese scholars have implied that China's foreign aid activities are mainly driven by economic and political interests. Chinese scholars indicate that recipient countries' ideology and regime types are not among the important determinants of China's aid allocation in the 21st century¹²⁵ since the primary objective of

¹²³ Philippa Brant, "Chinese Aid in the South Pacific: Linked to Resources?" *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (June 2013): 158–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2013.767311>.

¹²⁴ See Sears, "What Counts as Foreign Aid," (2019): 135-44.

See Bräutigam, "Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics'," (July 1, 2011): 752-64.

¹²⁵ See Pang and Wang, "The International Political Significance of Chinese and US Foreign Aid," (January 2018): 5-33.

China's foreign policy is to maintain and expand China's economic interest.¹²⁶ By contrast, most non-Chinese scholars have contributed to a wide range of empirical studies to examine the political determinants of China's aid allocation. They find empirical evidence that shows countries that are politically aligned with China and recognize the 'One-China' policy receive more aid from China.¹²⁷ Others elucidate that African relations formed during China's most ideological phase of foreign policy in the 1950s still influence the decision of China's aid allocations in the 21st century.¹²⁸ Most empirical studies from non-Chinese scholars provide sufficient evidence to support the classic realist power-seeking hypothesis that great powers like China use foreign aid as effective foreign policy tools to maintain their geopolitical dominance and exploit resources and markets in Africa. On the other hand, Chinese scholars agree that China's aid allocations should never be separated from the consideration of political interests. They argue that political motivation is an integral part of China's overall national strategy¹²⁹ and defend that political preferences do not equal to the politicization of aid.¹³⁰

Interestingly, non-Chinese scholars seem not to overly criticize China's self-interest motivation in part that some empirical studies do not find evidence to prove that western donors are superior to China in terms of intentions of aid-giving. For example, some non-Chinese scholars compare the determinants of conventional arm-transfer in Sub-Saharan Africa between China and the U.S. They find that China gives arm-transfers to countries that respect the physical integrity rights of people, while the U.S seems to prefer to give more arm-transfers

¹²⁶ Yanzhong, Huang "Domestic Politics and China's Health Aid to Africa." *China: An International Journal* 12, no. 3 (2014), p. 181.

¹²⁷ See Dreher, et al., "Aid, China and Growth," (2017): 1-50.

See Dreher and Fuchs, "Rogue Aid," (2015): 988-1023.

¹²⁸ See Morgan, "Ideology and Relationality: Chinese Aid in Africa Revisited," (June 2018): 207-38.

¹²⁹ Meibo Huang and Jianmei Hu. "Foreign Aid Study: Chinese Schools and Chinese Points." *The Pacific Review* 33, no. 3-4 (July 3, 2020): 520-49.

¹³⁰ Zhongguang Niu. "China's Development and Its Aid Presence in Africa: A Critical Reflection from the Perspective of Development Anthropology." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 51, no. 2 (April 2016): 199-221.

to autocracies¹³¹. The authors further argue that “western views of China in Africa are skewed by the elite perception of China as a rival for resources and influence in Africa”.¹³²

In addition, some Chinese scholars explicate that China’s aid is driven by humanitarian motivation. Humanitarian motivation has twofold explanations. First, it explicates that China provides humanitarian emergency relief assistance to countries experiencing unexpected events and emergencies, such as natural disaster, conflicts and wars.¹³³ Second, it suggests that Chinese people make a great sacrifice while providing a large amount of foreign aid. For example, China used to provide 10 billion RMB grants to Albania in the 1950s, which means that each Chinese person contributed 3, 850 RMB. Nevertheless, the average annual income of a Chinese household was only 200 RMB.¹³⁴ Though such a sense of generosity and self-sacrifice may help China gain a positive global image, some Chinese scholars also argue that China should not provide foreign aid at the expense of domestic development and should not overestimate its budget capacity.¹³⁵ To sum up, Chinese scholars provide other perspectives of interpreting the motivation of China’s aid allocation other than political and economic interests.

Thematic Syntheses

- Scholars agreed that economic and political interests mainly drive China’s foreign aid in the 21st century. Chinese scholars hold the view that contemporary China’s foreign aid-giving primarily serves for the national economic interests, while non-Chinese scholars provide more empirical investigations on political intentions.

¹³¹ Indra De Soysa and Paul Midford. “Enter the Dragon! An Empirical Analysis of Chinese versus US Arms Transfers to Autocrats and Violators of Human Rights, 1989-2006: Enter the Dragon! An Empirical Analysis of Chinese versus US Arms Transfers.” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (December 2012): 843–56.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See Huang and Hu, “Foreign Aid Study: Chinese Schools,” (July 3, 2020): 520-49.

See Ren, “Interpreting China’s Foreign Aid: A Preliminary Theoretical Analysis,” (2016): 155-163.

¹³⁴ Yang and Chen, “China’s Foreign Aid: Achievements, Lessons,” 50.

¹³⁵ See Ding, “European and American Recognition on China’s Foreign aid,” (2016): 40-47.

See Yang and Chen, “China’s Foreign Aid: Achievements, Lessons, and Benign Development.” (2010): 46-56.

See Jiang, “Modernization, National Security and Foreign Aid,” (2019): 121-54.

- Though most non-Chinese scholars remain critical to China’s intention of aid-giving, they do not severely criticize China as western donors’ engagement in recipient countries also brings about a series of problems similar to China.
- Chinese scholars suggest that some of China’s aid is driven by humanitarian motivation. Though the provision of aid out of generosity and self-sacrifice helps China build a positive global image, Chinese scholars also argue that China’s aid-giving activities should align with the domestic development agenda.

6.3.3 Collaborative Exploration on China’s Aid and Development Model

How scholars explore and evaluate “China’s Model of Development”

Non-Chinese scholars prefer to use the principles and practice of the DAC development model to compare and evaluate the design and implementation of China’s aid projects. First, some non-Chinese scholars emphasize that “China makes an explicit link between development aid and economic activity than most western donors”.¹³⁶ Since economic interests remain one of the priorities of contemporary China’s foreign policy objectives, China’s aid is usually implemented through specific funding projects rather than broader programs or policies.¹³⁷ Therefore, scholars’ investigations on China’s aid projects are always inseparable from China’s economic engagements (such as trade and investment) with recipient countries. Non-Chinese scholars generally hold critical viewpoints on China’s aid model as it blurs the boundaries between development intention and business orientations.¹³⁸

Second, most non-Chinese scholars find that most of China’s aid projects are request-based and focus on investment and infrastructure as opposed to the DAC’s supply-driven projects aiming at strengthening state capacity of recipient countries, such as debt relief and budget

¹³⁶ Kassaye Deyassa. “Does China’s Aid in Africa Affect Traditional Donors?” *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 23, no. 1 (2018): 199–215.

¹³⁷ Urbina-Ferretjans and Surender, “Social Policy in the Context,” 267.

¹³⁸ See Mohan and Power, “New African Choice?” (2008): 23–42; See Schiere, “Building Complementarities in Africa,” (2010): 615–62; See Samy, “China’s Aid Policies in Africa,” (February 2010): 75–90.

support.¹³⁹ Though China's aid to infrastructure sectors is relatively small in terms of the project numbers, these projects always attract more attention due to their large sizes.¹⁴⁰ As SOEs are primary implementers of China's large-scale infrastructure projects, many non-Chinese scholars have substantially examined the role of SOEs in the process of project implementations. They find that SOEs have advantages over private enterprises in terms of government's preferential policies and chances of getting concessional loans.¹⁴¹ SOEs are found to be accountable commercial actors compared to private enterprises in that they are "closely connected to and well-monitored by China's bureaucracies and policy banks."¹⁴² Nevertheless, a recent study from Chinese scholar indicates that SOEs' dominating role in executive industries has been challenged as private sectors are becoming the new engine of economic exchange, with 85% private-owned enterprises in African since 2005.¹⁴³

Third, China's aid projects to social sectors receive less attention from non-Chinese scholars than infrastructure projects (see section 6.2). In general, non-Chinese scholars show very critical attitudes toward China's social sectoral aid. Some non-Chinese scholars argue that most of China's social sectoral aid programs still follow a similar demand-driven approach that emphasizes on providing materials and equipment. Such an approach does not promote direct social policy changes that focus on income poor and social exclusion¹⁴⁴ and may not help build state capacities of the recipient countries¹⁴⁵. In this respect, Chinese scholars provide more detailed assessments of the implementation process of China's social sectoral aid. Chinese scholars suggest that subnational actors, such as provincial and city government, local health authorities, universities, are significant development agents in China's health, agriculture, and

¹³⁹ Warmerdam, Ward, and Arjan de Haan. "The Dialectics of China's Foreign Aid: Interactions Shaping China's Aid Policy." *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 617–48.

¹⁴⁰ Morgan and Zheng, "Old bottle new wine," 1294.

¹⁴¹ Merriden Varrall, "Domestic Actors and Agendas in Chinese Aid Policy." *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 1 (January 2016): 21–44.

¹⁴² Morgan and Zheng, "Old bottle new wine," 1295.

¹⁴³ Lingfei Weng, Jeffrey A. Sayer, and Lan Xue. "Will China Redefine Development Patterns in Africa? Evidence from Cameroon." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 4, no. 3 (July 1, 2017): 506–12.

¹⁴⁴ Urbina-Ferretjans and Surrender, "Social Policy in the Context," 268.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

educational aid, while discussion on these entities is “missing in the discourse regarding China’s aid”.¹⁴⁶ Most Chinese social sectoral aid programs include decentralized cooperation at the implementation stage and create a special delivery system called “twinning”.¹⁴⁷ For example, China’s provinces or health bureaus at the city level can be “twinned” with particular African countries and African countries can have medical teams from different Chinese provinces.¹⁴⁸ Confucius Institutes and other cultural exchanges for educational purposes are also twinned with Chinese university and culture organizations.¹⁴⁹ China’s research institutes can send technical experts to operate the Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers (ATDCs)¹⁵⁰ in African countries. Decentralization cooperation and twinning systems help subnational Chinese actors to go abroad. However, such an implementation approach also brings about a bilaterally asymmetric relationship as provincial entities have the autonomy to build cooperative relationships with a national government.¹⁵¹

Last, non-Chinese and Chinese scholars all provide very detailed institutional structure analysis of China’s central decision-making body of China’s aid policies. Scholars all point out that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials play the detrimental roles in deciding and shaping China’s aid policies.¹⁵² Scholars also suggest the rivalry relationships between China’s two important aid agencies: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFCOM). MOFA and MOFCOM often have competing government mandates as the former intends to use aid flows to enhance diplomatic relationships, while the latter highlights the economic interests of China’s overseas

¹⁴⁶ Xuefei Shi and Paul Hoebink. “From Chengdu to Kampala: The Role of Subnational Actors in China’s Foreign Aid.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 121 (January 2, 2020): 125–40.

¹⁴⁷ Shi and Hoebink, “From Chengdu to Kampala,” 133.

¹⁴⁸ Huang, “Domestic Politics and China’s Health,” 194.

¹⁴⁹ Shi and Hoebink, “From Chengdu to Kampala,” 134.

¹⁵⁰ “ATDCs represent a form of agriculture cooperation that include agricultural technology extension stations, technology experiment stations, and large-scale farms in Africa. By 2016, 23 ATDCs had been built in African countries.”

Zhang, Chuanhong, Li, Xiaoyun, Edwin F. Connerley, and Jin Wu. “Role Tension and Adaptation in a Chinese Agricultural Aid Project in Mozambique.” *Journal of International Development* 31, no. 3 (2019): 231–46.

¹⁵¹ Shi and Hoebink, “From Chengdu to Kampala,” 129.

¹⁵² See Chin, “China as a ‘Net Donor’,” (2012): 579-603.

enterprises.¹⁵³ Prior to the establishment of CIDCA, non-Chinese scholars have frequently suggested that the different agencies' pursuits of agendas can result in contradictory policies and coordination problems in China's aid policy planning.¹⁵⁴ The recent study from Chinese scholars explicate that CIDCA still faces a series of challenges. As a new institution, lack of professional and implementation capacities will limit CIDCA's department capacities to make coordination with the two powerful ministries (MOF and MOFCOM), oversee aid implementations, and evaluate aid performance.¹⁵⁵

Thematic Syntheses

- Non-Chinese scholars hold critical viewpoints on China's commercial-oriented and request-based aid approach as it mixes development intention and business orientations.
- China's aid to infrastructure sectors receives most of the attention from non-Chinese scholars. As SOEs are the major implementors of large-scale infrastructure projects, non-Chinese scholars substantially explore SOE's roles and practices in project implementations.
- Chinese scholars suggest that private-owned enterprises and subnational actors are critical actors in project implementations other than SOEs. Subnational actors are significant implementers of China's aid to social sectors. Decentralized cooperation and twinning system represent special delivery mechanisms of China's social sectoral aid.
- Scholars all contribute to specific institutional structure analysis of China's central decision-making bodies and point out new institutional challenges of China's aid policy planning and practices in the future.

¹⁵³ See Varrall, "Domestic Actors and Agendas," (2016): 21-44.

See Zhang and Smith, "China's Foreign Aid System," (October 3, 2017): 2330-46.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Jianzhi Zhao and Yijia Jing, "The Governance of China's Foreign Aid System: Evolution and Path Dependence." *Public Administration and Development* 39, no. 4-5 (October 2019), p. 189.

6.3.4 Nuanced Debates on the Impacts of China's Foreign Aid

How scholars explore the impacts of China's foreign aid

As indicated in section 6.2, scholars mainly conduct their studies from the perspective of donor countries when examining the impacts of China's foreign aid. Non-Chinese scholars argue that since China is not a part of OECD-DAC members, China is free to establish its own terms and rules of aid allocation and project implementations.¹⁵⁶ China's development aid philosophy and policies are always conflicted with western norms.¹⁵⁷ China's unwillingness to join DAC's development assistance framework has raised concerns among western donors who believe that "China's aid can undermine DAC's commitments to transparency, a right-based approach and democratic ownership and further weakens the legitimacy of the Paris consensus."¹⁵⁸

In spite of the harsh criticism of China's aid from western elites and mass media, most non-Chinese scholars hold impartial attitudes toward China's rise as a new donor. On the one hand, recent empirical studies have unjustified many wide-spread adverse claims on China's aid: "at the aggregated level, China's aid is not disproportionately focused on resource exploitation, land-grabbing, or authoritarian regimes."¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, scholars also show suspicion about China's commercial-based aid and development model. For example, many non-Chinese scholars point out that the high ratio of tied aid (such as export of Chinese workers and the procurement of Chinese firms' goods) of Chinese business enterprises can detract the ownership of aid projects from the recipient countries.¹⁶⁰ China's indifference to relocation issues of local citizens, environment and social standards are often cited as potentially

¹⁵⁶ Palina, Prysmakova, "Chinese Intergovernmental Relations and World Development: Origins and Impacts of Chinese Export Credits." *International Journal of Public Administration* 40, no. 12 (October 15, 2017), p.1051.

¹⁵⁷ Harpaz, "China's Coherence in International Economic Governance," 137.

¹⁵⁸ Urbina-Ferretjans and Surender, "Social Policy in the Context," 271.

¹⁵⁹ Morgan, "Ideology and Relationality: Chinese Aid in Africa Revisited," 210.

¹⁶⁰ See Schiere, "Building Complementarities in Africa," (2010): 615-628.
See Warmerdam, "Lessons on Ownership in China's," (2013): 435-464.

problematic for recipient countries.¹⁶¹ Some scholars also reveal that China's aid model has influenced some DAC donors' thinking about the relationship between economic growth and development.¹⁶² For instance, DAC members have re-opened the debates on the importance of infrastructure in promoting development in recent years. ODA gross disbursements for financial disbursements for economic infrastructure from DAC countries to all developing countries has increased from US\$ 8.1 billion in 2005 to US\$ 14.8 billion in 2011.¹⁶³

Views from Chinese scholars reaffirm that China is seeking to develop its own norms and theories of aid and development instead of complying with the DAC's development assistance system. Meanwhile, Chinese scholars stress that "China's aid is not a challenge to the existing development assistance system because the scale and impacts of China's aid are not enough to challenge the dominate position of traditional donors."¹⁶⁴ Besides, Chinese scholars show critical attitudes toward China's aid policies and recent practices and further suggest that "China's aid so far have been more experience-driven, based on trial and error."¹⁶⁵ First, many scholars have indicated that China has not yet formed a complete foreign aid theoretical system that conceptualizes China's past development experience and suits China's domestic development agenda.¹⁶⁶ As discussed in the previous sections, regulatory gaps in China's aid data management have also led to transparency issues. Second, some scholars also highlighted the lack of professional aid experts for development project planning, implementation and evaluation.¹⁶⁷ In particular, the lack of qualified aid workers for decentralized cooperation could be problems for provincial and local governments as they are major project

¹⁶¹ See Mohan and Power, "New African Choice?" (2008): 23-42; See Trinidad, "Institutional Mismatch and Chinses Aid," (2016): 299-328.

¹⁶² Urbina-Ferretjans and Surender, "Social Policy in the Context," 272.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Huang and Hu, "Foreign Aid Study: Chinese Schools,"

¹⁶⁵ Xiuli Xu et al., "Science, Technology, and the Politics of Knowledge: The Case of China's Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers in Africa." *World Development* 81 (May 2016), p.88.

¹⁶⁶ See Yang and Chen, "China's Foreign Aid: Achievements, Lessons," (2010): 46-46.

See Zhu, "International Aid Regime and China's Foreign Aid," (2013): 67-71

See Chen, "Five Perspectives from China's Foreign Aid," (2006):92-95.

¹⁶⁷ See Xu et al, "Science, Technology and the Politics of Knowledge," (May 2016):82-91.

implementers.¹⁶⁸ Third, a few scholars imply that China should cooperate with traditional donors. From their perspectives, multilateral cooperation can help allay skepticism from western donors, improve China's aid performance, and build China's new global image as a new power in development sectors.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, scholars also point out that some recipient countries fear that China's cooperation with traditional donors could compromise China's aid and development principles and contradicts China's identity as a developing country.¹⁷⁰ Last, some Chinese scholars provide preliminary examinations of Chinese citizens' opinions and find that "Chinese citizens, especially those from the less-developed regions, do not understand the necessity of helping other countries especially when some recipient countries have a higher GDP per capita than China."¹⁷¹

In terms of China's aid impacts on the recipient countries, scholars all agreed that China's aid has tangible and positive economic impacts on the recipient countries. Many studies suggest that most recipient countries show appreciation to China's aid projects as these projects reduce transportation costs, create job opportunities, and produce affordable goods and products for the local citizens.¹⁷² However, scholars all point out that the benefits of these projects are not equally distributed between China and recipient countries, and different social groups in the recipient countries. Scholars all note that local contractors and laborers appear to be loser in China's aid projects because Chinese enterprises remain the high percent of tied aid and unwilling to employ local people.¹⁷³ Non-Chinese scholars underscore that China's principles of non-interference and nonchalance to local governance issues in the recipient countries', such as elite corruption and state repression, may offset the positive impacts of China's aid.¹⁷⁴ As

¹⁶⁸ Shi and Hoebink, "From Chengdu to Kampala," 139.

¹⁶⁹ Denghua Zhang, "Why Cooperate with Others? Demystifying China's Trilateral Aid Cooperation." *The Pacific Review* 30, no. 5 (September 3, 2017), p.755.

¹⁷⁰ Zhang, "Why Cooperate with Others?" 763.

¹⁷¹ Zhang, "Why Cooperate with Others?" 750.

¹⁷² See Bluhm et al., "Connective Financing: Chinese Infrastructure Projects," (2018)

See Zou et al., "China's Foreign Aid to Cameroon," (April 2020): 49-70.

¹⁷³ See Zou et al., "China's Foreign Aid to Cameroon," (April 2020): 49-70.

See Prysmakova, "Chinese Intergovernmental Relations," 1055.

¹⁷⁴ See Kishi, "Chinese Official Finance and State Repression," (2017)

China's aid projects are often built on the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relationships, it is up to political leaders in the recipient countries to manage their relations with China for the benefit of their own economies and citizens.¹⁷⁵ Governments often see China's aid projects and direct investment as a political advantage as China provides leverage to formulate their political agenda.¹⁷⁶ Legal and political controversies on the projects can also be exploited by different political opposition groups in the recipient countries, which succeeded in associating these projects with the unpopular incumbent administration.¹⁷⁷

Thematic Syntheses

- In general, most non-Chinese scholars show interests in China's aid and development models. Scholars help debunk many negative claims on the global impacts of China's aid from western political elite and mass media, while they also explicate several concerns and problems from China's project implementations, such as the high ratio of tied aid, indifference to the local governance issues. Some scholars also suggest that China's aid approach has made traditional donors rethink their past theories and practices of aid and development.
- Chinese scholars highlight that China is not eager to challenge the existing global aid and development system, while they suggest that China should conceptualize its past development experiences, formulate the laws and regulations, and develop human capital to improve China's aid performance.
- Scholars all explicate that China's aid projects bring positive economic impacts to the recipient countries. Nevertheless, scholars also note that many China's aid projects do not fully take account of local employment as Chinese firms often prioritize their own interest.

See Strange, "Seven Decades of Chinese State Financing," (September 2, 2019): 259-79.

¹⁷⁵ Mohan and Power, "Towards critical geopolitics," 25.

¹⁷⁶ Prysmakova, "Chinese Intergovernmental Relations," 1050.

¹⁷⁷ Trinidad, "Institutional Mismatch and Chinese Aid in the Philippines," 302-305.

7. Conclusions and Implications

By applying general principles of systematic review and implementing a mixed-method synthesis approach, this paper explores and compares the recent topics, concepts, and controversies on China's foreign aid from Chinese and international scholars.

First, this paper finds the term "foreign aid" ("对外援助") is the most commonly referenced in articles regardless of the language in publications. Non-Chinese scholars are particularly concerned about the quantitative measurement of China's aid flow. They imply that the blurring boundaries between China's ODA-like state finance and other economic cooperation forms makes it even harder to define and classify different types of resources flows. Scholars all agree that the lack of reliable data source has implications for the transparency of China's aid policies and governance. Transparency issues have led to suspicion and skepticism among non-Chinese scholars, western mass media and political elites. Limited data source also restricts scholars' investigation and evaluation of China's aid.

Second, this paper shows that scholars agree that political and economic interests mainly drive contemporary China's aid allocation. Chinese scholars emphasize that China's aid in the 21st century is aligned with its contemporary foreign policy objectives: to expand and promote economic interests. Yet, they also acknowledge that China's aid allocations have strong political preferences. Non-Chinese scholars have noted that political intention is still one of the crucial predictors of contemporary China's aid allocation, while most scholars do not heavily criticize China's self-interest motivation of aid-giving as traditional donors are not different from China in this regard. Apart from scholars' substantial discussions on political and economic intentions of China's aid, Chinese scholars add that some of China's aid is driven by the dedication and sacrifice of Chinese people.

Third, this paper shows that scholars are all dedicated to the detailed institutional structure analysis of decision-making process of China's aid policies. Non-Chinese scholars focus on

exploring the implementation process of China's infrastructure and construction projects due to its large scale and eye-popping global influence. They contribute to substantial discussions on SOEs' roles as they are primary contractors of China's large-scale aid projects. On the other hand, Chinese scholars provide detailed illustrations of China's special aid delivery mechanisms other than SOEs. China's health, education, and agriculture aid programs are often implemented through decentralized cooperation and twinning systems at the provincial level.

Last, this paper notices that scholars mostly conduct their studies in the view of donor countries. Most non-Chinese scholars show impartial attitudes toward China's performance as a new donor. Scholars all explain that China's aid and development models have positive economic impacts on the recipient countries. Non-Chinese scholars suggest that China's for-profit model often entails more protections to China's business enterprises, while it ignores the interests and welfare of local citizens in the recipient countries. They also criticize China's adherence to non-interference and nonchalance with respect to local governance issues. Conversely, Chinese scholars stress that China is not ready to challenge the status quo of global aid and development regime. They emphasize that China should continue to develop its own concepts of development theory and practice and strengthen its administrative capacities to enhance China's aid performance.

To conclude, this paper contributes to a preliminary evaluation on the recent publications of China's foreign aid in different languages, which further bridges the communication and research gaps between scholars speaking different languages. This paper still has the following limitations: (1) since there are no similar review papers regarding this research topic, the inter-coder reliability of the existing coding frameworks remains to be further evaluated; (2) This paper inevitably has similar methodological limitations of many qualitative studies. It produces detailed information regarding each review question while may simultaneously reduce the generalizability of the findings.

Appendix

Appendix-1 Bibliography of English articles included in this review

1. Bluhm, Richard, Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin Strange, and Michael J. Tierney. "Connective Financing: Chinese Infrastructure Projects and the Diffusion of Economic Activity in Developing Countries." *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2018) <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3262101>.
2. Brant, Philippa. "Chinese Aid in the South Pacific: Linked to Resources?" *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (June 2013): 158–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2013.767311>.
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4. Chen, Kevin Z., Claire Hsu, and Shenggen Fan. "Steadying the Ladder: China's Agricultural and Rural Development Engagement in Africa." *China Agricultural Economic Review* 6, no. 1 (2014): 2–20.
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6. Chin, Gregory T. "China as a 'Net Donor': Tracking Dollars and Sense." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 579–603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.744641>.
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Appendix -2 Bibliography of Chinese articles included in this review

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Appendix-3 Non-Chinese Scholars Coding Framework

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=48	References N=690
1. Definition	Texts that indicate what should be defined and measured as China's foreign aid	34	182
1.1 Principles	Texts that include direct interpretations of China's aid delivery based on the existing official policy documents	28	94
1.1.1 BRI Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss whether and how the <u>BRI Initiative</u> influences China's existing aid regime Example: "One belt, One Road is the latest and largest manifestation of China's role as a source of finance for development and foreign aid (Sears 2019)." 	4	17
1.1.2 Mutual Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that interpret the "<u>Mutual benefit</u>" principle of China's foreign aid Example: "Nevertheless, no matter the types of Chinese aid, it is official Chinese policy, and it is deemed more mutually beneficial to disburse aid (Ubi 2014)." 	3	3
1.1.3 Non-Conditionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that interpret the "<u>Non-conditionality</u>" or "no political string attached" principle Example: "China's aid has become particularly attractive to African leaders, precisely because it comes with no conditionality on governance, fiscal probity, and the other concerns of western donors (Konings 2016)." 	11	15
1.1.4 Non-Interference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that interpret the "<u>Non-interference</u>" principle of China's foreign aid Example: "However, when we compare its allocation to those of other donors, China does not pay significantly more attention to politics (Dreher et al. 2015)." 	4	6
1.2 South-South Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss how china defines its role as an aid donor and how its new role influences its aid delivery Examples: "Gauging the relations between developing and developed states in terms of a <u>North-South conflict</u>, this discourse served as a powerful glue whereby China sought to <u>construct a common identity with</u> African states vis-a`-vis the paternalistic West (Tull 2006)." 	14	51
1.3 Proxy Definition	Texts that critically examine China's official definition of aid and propose new ways of measuring of China's aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples: "Based on these previous attempts by researchers, in this paper, I define China's foreign aid as <u>proxy for China's bilateral ODA as a combination of grants and interest-free loans</u> managed by the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant ministries, and the China Exim-bank's concessional loans as bilateral aid and central government expenditure for international organizations (Kitano 2014)." 	12	40
1.4 Types of Resource Flows	Texts that classify the types of flows of China's aid by interpreting the official documents or analyzing the aid projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples: "China's official aid is a subset of the <u>many kinds of official finance</u> offered by the Chinese government, some of which finance other economic activities carried out overseas by Chinese companies, institutes and provincial ministries (Bräutigam 2011)." 	15	48
2. Motivation	Texts that indicate the clarifications and discussions on the motives or determinants of China's foreign aid	24	98
2.1 Economic Interest	Texts that discuss China's economic incentives of aid-giving or development cooperation activities	16	42

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=48	References N=690
2.1.1 Domestic Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine similar claims like “China’s aid is driven by the requirement of domestic economic development.” Example: “Africa’s population of over 700 million was singled out as <u>an enormous potential market</u> for China’s relatively inexpensive low- and <u>medium-grade consumer product</u> (Konings 2016)” 	10	20
2.1.2 Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine similar claims like “China’s aid is driven by natural resource exploitation.” Example: “It is clear that China’s aid programs are directed towards supporting China’s national interests in some fashion, but in the Pacific at least, this does <u>not take the form of being focused primarily on the natural resources sector</u> (Brant 2013).” 	12	21
2.2 Political Interest	Texts that discuss China’s political incentives of aid-giving or development cooperation activities	19	56
2.2.1 Diplomatic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine similar claims like “China uses aid to gain diplomatic support.” Examples: “We want to stress that China has always engaged strategically with Africa and used the continent to bolster its <u>geopolitical interests</u>, which marks it out as similar to other superpowers (Mohan et al. 2008)” 	13	29
2.2.2 Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine similar claims like “China’s aid disbursement is ideologically driven.” Examples: “Paradoxically, it appears that the African relationships formed during China’s most ideological phase of foreign policy in the late 1950s and 1960s still <u>exert an influence on Chinese policymakers’ aid allocation decisions today</u> as they seek to maintain long-stand (Morgan 2018).” 	3	9
2.2.3 Soft Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine similar claims like “China uses aid to expand its global influences”. Examples: “In practice, contemporary China draws on both cultural (e.g., Confucius Institutes and Chinese television networks) and economic (aid, trade, and investment) tools to build its <u>soft power</u>.” 	8	16
3. Implementation Modes	Texts that interpret and evaluate how China’s aid projects/finance are organized and delivered	26	128
3.1 Efficient Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews or case studies that discuss the efficiency of China’s aid projects delivery Examples: “A good example is seen in Ghana where negotiations with the World Bank to build a dam stalled for about seven years. When the Ghanaian government decided to engage China, <u>it merely took two months for the deal to be settled. Project implementation started a month later</u> (Kinyondo 2019).” 	3	4
3.2 For-Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or interview findings that discuss the business-oriented characteristic of China’s aid projects Example: “The engagement of China, on the contrary, is more <u>business oriented</u> and supports infrastructure projects, which are provided on a competitive basis and are finalized on time (Schiere 2010).” 	2	3
3.3 Institutions and Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews or case studies that discuss the institutions and actors engaged in China’s aid project delivery Example: “<u>A complex web of government and non-government actors exists at state, provincial, and local levels, jostling for space and influence over foreign aid policy.</u> These actors have interests and agendas that are often non-complementary, if not outright contradictory, resulting in considerable debate about how to best conceptualize and deliver aid (Varrall 2016). 	12	64
3.4 Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews or case studies that examine how China’s aid project is delivered and managed by different actors. Examples: “The aid is usually implemented through specific projects rather than broader programs or policies. Unlike traditional donors, <u>Chinese</u> 	11	42

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=48	References N=690
	<u>aid is usually provided in the form of Chinese workers who build roads or hospitals instead of providing financial resources</u> (Deyassa 2019).”		
3.5 Request-Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that argue “China’s aid is based on the needs of the recipient countries”. • Example: “China’s foreign aid is considered <u>demand-driven</u> (Unsworth, 2010; Wood et al., 2008).⁹ This contrasts with traditional donor supply driven project aid. Sector and budget support were introduced to overcome problems associated this supply-driven project aid (Warmerdam 2013).” 	3	3
3.6 Thematic Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss the sectoral focus of China’s aid projects, mainly including infrastructure and energy. • Example: “China’s government has consistently been willing to <u>finance major transportation, power generation, and other infrastructure projects</u> that serve as ‘building blocks’ of development, often in precarious political and geographic environments (Strange 2019).” 	8	11
4. Impacts	Texts that discuss the impacts of China’s aid	43	283
4.1 Impact on DAC Countries	Texts that discuss the impacts of China’s aid on the DAC countries	31	147
4.1.1 Threats to DAC Aid Regime and Norms	Texts that examine how China’s aid influences the DAC aid regimes and development norms	30	138
a. DAC Development Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss “whether or to what extent should China be included and comply with the DAC norms.” • Example: “One of the toughest problems in any effort by the DAC to initiate efforts to boost cooperation and coordination with China and other middle-income donors is that <u>China is not (and probably cannot be) a member of the OECD</u> (Bräutigam 2011).” 	13	43
b. DAC Aid Effectiveness Regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss “whether China’s aid projects threaten aid effectiveness regime (such as ownership, etc.)” • Example: “The Chinese emphasis on local ownership can lead to ‘prestige’ projects that do not appear to be poverty-reducing: a new government office building, a sports stadium or a conference center. They rarely give budget support, and they have not contributed to common pool ‘basket financing’ of sectors, which is a growing trend among the DAC donors (Bräutigam 2011).” 	5	21
c. Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that argue “actors of China’s aid projects are indifferent of <u>social responsibility issues</u>, such as environment protection, human right, etc.” • Example: “Unlike their Japanese counterparts, Chinese officials <u>were unconcerned about the relocation issue</u> (Trinidad 2016).” 	3	4
d. Tied-Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that argue “China’s aid is ‘<u>tied</u>’ with domestic labor and product/string-attached/” • Example: “Suffice to argue here that, by <u>tying aid to the use of Chinese firms and supplies</u>, in itself is a <u>form of condition for aid</u>, even if it is not political conditions as is often imposed by the West (Ubi 2014).” 	5	12
e. Rogue Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments or empirical findings that examine claim “<u>foreign aid provided by non-democracies</u> is a threat to international development cooperation.” • Example: “The <u>rogue aid thesis is highly influential within media narratives</u>. However, it has largely been refuted by existing quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence (Morgan 2018).” 	13	29
f. Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that argue “China’s aid is implemented and reported in a <u>non-transparent</u> way.” • Example: “One major limitation to an empirically driven intervention into this debate is <u>China’s lack of transparency and data reporting on foreign aid disbursements</u>. (Sear 2019).” 	9	14

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=48	References N=690
4.1.2 Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews that discuss should DAC donor countries cooperate with China regarding project design and delivery Example: “Somewhat surprisingly, given current social protection strategies, several <u>Western organizations emphasized their support for China’s prioritization of economic growth</u> rather than social expenditure (Urbina-Ferretjans 2013).” 	3	4
4.1.3 Self-reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews that indicate DAC countries rethink the aid regime based on China’s aid modalities Example: “<u>But we should not expect to learn much about the terms of Chinese commercial loans</u>. Even in the OECD countries, commercial bank loans and officially supported export credits are not particularly transparent (Bräutigam 2011).” 	5	6
4.1.4 Geopolitical Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that argue China is <u>competing with the DAC countries</u> in terms of aid provision. Example: “Rather, simply by providing an alternative approach to aid recipients, China was introducing ‘<u>competitive pressures</u>’ into the system of international aid and forcing traditional donors to either justify their approach or revise it (Urbina-Ferretjans and Surrender 2013).” 	4	5
4.2 Impacts on Recipient Countries	Texts that discuss the impacts of China’s aid on recipient countries	27	106
4.2.1 Alternative Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview or case studies that examine claims like “China provides an <u>alternative source</u> of funding for recipient countries.” Example: “For the African countries, aid, and more importantly trade and investment, are all welcome as they can provide the necessary wherewithal to <u>reduce their own dependence on revenue from natural resources, and free themselves from the hegemony of traditional Western donors</u> (Samy 2010).” 	12	19
4.2.2 Conflict and Repression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine claims like “China’s aid increase <u>conflicts and repression</u> in recipient countries.” Example: “Compared to traditional official finance, Chinese official finance is more closely associated with <u>increased state violence against civilians</u>. But these observed effects of political violence should hold for any unconditional and unaccountable official finance, regardless of the donor (Kishi et al. 2017).” 	4	17
4.2.3 Debt Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments or empirical findings that examine claims like “China’s aid leads to the <u>debt crisis</u> in recipient countries.” Example: “China’s government <u>appears responsive to the potential debt implications</u> of its financing to African countries, as well as the international community’s perceptions thereof (Strange 2019).” 	3	11
4.2.4 Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguments, case studies, or empirical findings that examine claims like “China’s aid <u>promote economic development</u> in recipient countries.” Example: “China’s economic engagement will <u>encourage sustainable economic growth in Africa</u>. The evidence from an examination of textile industries, one of the few African economic success stories in recent years, is ambivalent indeed (Tull 2006).” 	8	15
4.2.5 Institution and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview or case studies that examine how China’s aid influence the local governments of the recipient countries.” Example: “The central and local governments in China see export credits as a solution, which allows local businesses operating without causing troubles for local governments. The associated burdens are transferred to recipient countries (Prysmakova 2017).” 	10	33
4.2.6 Local Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview or case studies of how China’s aid exerts impacts on <u>civil societies</u> in the recipient countries Example: “We suggested that <u>China’s involvement will not fundamentally alter Africa’s place in the global division of labor</u>. It simply adds a new and significant market without challenging the continent’s extraversion (Mohan et al. 2008).” 	3	6

Appendix-4 Chinese Scholars Coding Framework

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=44	References N=539
1. Definition	Texts that indicate what should be defined and measured as China's foreign aid.	27	95
1.1 Principles	Texts that include the direct interpretation of China's aid delivery based on the existing official policy documents	25	82
1.1.1 BRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss whether and how the <u>BRI Initiative</u> influences China's existing aid regime Example: "The SilkRoad Fund and <u>AIIB under the BRI Initiative</u> are two pillars of China's international cooperation (Bai 2015)." 	2	10
1.1.2 China's Development Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss how the principles of China's aid delivery defined by its <u>development norms</u>. Example: "<u>Chinese aid in Africa has its own uniqueness associated with its development experience and philosophical mode of thinking and doing.</u> To be specific, immersed in their unique philosophical way of thinking, Chinese people, as per my personal observation and experience, prefer "outcomes" rather than "norms" or "procedures" as Western people emphasize (Niu 2016)." 	8	27
1.1.3 Mutual Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that interpret "<u>Mutual benefit</u>" delivery principle of China's aid. Example: "<u>while making profits as all global enterprises do, Chinese enterprises in EIZ made "Made in Ethiopia 'a trademark of more industrial products</u> than the Ethiopian people had seen before in its long history (Niu 2016)." 	10	14
1.1.4 Non-conditionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that interpret "<u>Non-conditionality</u>" delivery principle of China's aid Example: "Differing from western donors, China fully respects the choice of recipient countries for its own ways of development. Therefore, China's aid <u>never attaches political strings on recipient countries</u> (Ren, 2016)." 	2	2
1.1.5 Recipient's Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss that China's aid projects are based on the <u>recipient needs</u> Example: "The knowledge transfer of China's aid program is designed according <u>to the needs of the recipient countries</u>. For example, acupuncture is a cost-effective training program for countries with poor healthcare systems (Zhu, 2017)." 	6	6
1.2 South-South Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine whether/how the principles and delivery of China's aid resonate with <u>the South-South Cooperation</u> Example: "Advertising its identity as a developing country brings benefits for China. First, it justifies China's distinctive aid practices, such as its emphasis on mutual benefit to the recipient country as well as to China, through the use of Chinese workers and materials in aid projects (Zhang 2017)." 	14	23
1.3 Types of flows	Texts that classify the types of flows of China's aid by interpreting the official policy paper or analyzing the aid project	6	13
2. Motivations	Texts that indicate the clarifications and discussions on the motives or determinants of China's foreign aid	21	70
2.1 Economic Interest	Texts that analyze how economic interests become core concerns of China's aid policy and delivery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: "<u>China's growing demand for African resources</u> was coupled with its efforts to improve its international image and expand its influence in global governance to increase its foreign aid to Africa (Huang 2014)." 	11	25
2.2 Humanitarianism	Texts that interpret discuss China's aid with <u>humanitarian motivation/a sense of sacrifice</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: "<u>Foreign aid concerned with humanitarian motivation is predominantly used to help recipient countries 'cope with international unexpected events and emergencies,</u> alleviate the unfortunate situation of backward countries and save lives' (Huang & Tang, 2013)." 	5	8

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=44	References N=539
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Chinese people <u>made a great sacrifice</u> when China provided great aid volume for other developing countries (Yang 2010).” 		
2.3 Political Interest	<p>Texts that analyze how the pursuit of <u>political interests</u> become the core concerns of China’s aid policy and delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: “Chinese aid for a large part indirectly shapes the foreign policy of states by <u>preventing developing countries that are its aid recipients from recognizing Taiwan as a sovereign state</u> (Zou 2020).” 	16	37
3. Implementation Mode	Texts that interpret and evaluate how China’s aid projects are organized and delivered	19	90
3.1 Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies that examine how China’s aid project is delivered and managed by different actors. 	11	59
3.1.1 Central Decision-making Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies that examine the role of central decision-making body (State council, MOF, etc.) in the process of aid projects Example: “This highly <u>hierarchical and unified policy structure, when coupled with the predominance of political and ideological factors, enhanced the “bandwagon” effect</u>, which led to relatively efficient decision-making and discouraged willful disobedience in policy implementation (Huang 2014).” 	7	32
3.1.2 Decentralized Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies that indicate the role of <u>subnational actors</u> in the implementation of China’s aid projects 	8	27
a. SOEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the role of <u>State-Owned Enterprises</u> in China’s aid projects’ implementation Example: “Here it should be noted that, according to China’s requirement, projects funded by Chinese concessional loans need to be <u>undertaken by Chinese companies, especially the SOEs</u> (Zhang 2017).” 	2	2
b. IOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the role of international organizations in China’s aid projects’ implementation Example: “Ministry of agriculture and rural affairs of China has established a collaborative mechanism with Food and <u>Agriculture Organization (FAO)</u> to moderate agriculture cooperation in Uganda (Yu et al. 2020).” 	1	4
c. Private Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the role of <u>private companies</u> in China’s aid projects’ implementation Example: “However, this is no longer the case. Since 2005, <u>the private sector</u>, rather than government has increasingly become the engine of economic exchange between China and Africa (Weng et al. 2017).” 	2	5
d. Provincial Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the role of provincial institutions (provincial/city government/local hospitals/local university) in China’s aid projects’ implementation Example: “<u>These actors are responsible for the formalization of relationship</u> with foreign governments or counterparts in their respective fields (Shi 2020).” 	4	16
3.2 Thematic Focus	Texts that discuss the <u>sectoral focus/types</u> of China’s aid projects	10	31
3.2.1 Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies about China’s agriculture cooperation projects Example: “The ATDC is presented as an innovative model for <u>China-Africa agricultural cooperation</u>. The Center is focused on local agricultural development via technology demonstration and transfer, with land ownership in the hands of local technical cooperation partners (Xu et al. 2016).” 	3	10
3.2.2 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies about China’s <u>education aid projects</u> Example: “In the last 50 years, <u>China has forged cooperative relations in the field of education with 50 African countries</u>; however, it has received very little attention, compared with the extensive discussions of China’s economic relations with Africa (Yuan 2014).” 	4	6
3.2.3 Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies about China’s <u>health aid projects</u> 	2	10

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=44	References N=539
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: “Between 2007 and 2011, more than half of the estimated <u>Chinese health assistance to Africa</u> went to the construction of hospitals and anti-malarial centers, training of health personnel and provision of medical equipment and drugs (Huang 2014).” 		
3.2.4 Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies about China’s infrastructure projects 	2	3
3.2.5 Technology Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies of China’s human resource training/technology transfer projects Example: “However, <u>this aid is insufficient to tackle all the domains of significant importance for a better development pattern</u>. All major areas in Cameroon need to be improved thus in great need of funds (Zou 2020).” 	1	2
4. Impacts	Texts that discuss the impacts of China’s aid	39	283
4.1 Domestic Impacts	Texts that discuss the impacts of China’s foreign aid on China’s domestic economic growth, aid policy framing, and management	33	199
4.1.1 Domestic Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the impact of foreign aid on China’s <u>domestic economic growth</u> Example: “<u>Financial support and concessional loans</u> enabled Chinese national oil companies to expand their investments in Algeria, Angola, Chad, Mauritius, South Sudan and Niger, with Angola alone accounting for 50% of oil imports from Africa (Weng et al. 2017).” 	6	20
4.1.2 Global Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that examine the impact of foreign aid on China’s <u>global image</u> Example: “It is in China’s enlightened self-interests to promote in-depth and extensive exchanges, which would not only <u>boost China’s image as a constructive partner in global governance</u>, but also help China align with internationally accepted aid practice and avoid repeating the mistakes made by developed countries in providing foreign aid (Huang 2014).” 	7	15
4.1.3 Public Opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that indicate the <u>opinions of Chinese people</u> on the expansion of China’s aid volume and projects Example: “However, internally, <u>many Chinese citizens do not understand the necessity of helping other countries when much of its own population continue to live below the poverty line</u>, and especially when some recipient countries have a higher GDP per capita than China (Zhang 2017).” 	5	7
4.1.4 Self-Reflections	Texts that discuss the lessons and implications of China’s aid projects	29	157
a. Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that critically examine the <u>central decision-making process of aid policies</u>, projects design and delivery Example: “In addition to MOFCOM and MFA, the proposals of Chinese aid projects need to be endorsed by MoF. A number of line ministries actively compete for a slice of China’s aid budget, but they are limited to their areas of technical expertise (Zhang and Smith 2017)” 	8	27
b. Aid Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that imply foreign aid increases the dependence of recipient countries on China (loan default/debt crisis) Example: “Since the period of forging debts is often decided quite arbitrarily, some recipient countries always delay the loan payment or wait relief (Chen 2006).” 	1	2
c. Cultural Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that suggest the issue of cultural integration, such as <u>language and communication</u> during the implementation of aid projects Example: “<u>Bad communication in English or in local languages poses another significant challenge for the efficiency of knowledge transfer</u> (Shi 2020).” 	3	21
d. Human Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that imply the <u>lack of aid experts/professionals</u> to design and manage aid projects Example: “<u>As they lack aid expertise</u>, staff from the Economic and Commercial Counsellors’ offices are mainly involved from the political perspective and are not expected to contribute technical knowledge (Zhang and Smith 2017).” 	5	9

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=44	References N=539
e. Multi-lateral Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss <u>China's intention to cooperate with some DAC donors and multilateral institutions</u> in terms of aid projects design and delivery • Example: “<u>China's trilateral aid cooperation sends a signal that China is interested in cooperation with traditional donors.</u> As China continues to expand its foreign aid and plays a more proactive role in international development initiatives such as the Agenda 2030, opportunities exist for more trilateral aid cooperation between China and these partners (Zhang 2017).” 	7	32
f. Non-State Actor Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that indicate <u>the lack of participation of Chinese civil societies/NGOs</u> in aid projects designs and delivery • Example: “A second domestic issue that affects China's health aid to Africa is <u>the lack of participation by Chinese civil society in these efforts.</u> Successful implementation of health aid projects often hinges upon the support of civil society organization (Huang 2014).” 	10	19
g. Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that imply the lack of regulations/<u>legislation</u> of China's aid programming, management and evaluation • Example: “When comparing aid-related decision-making in China with that of other DAC member states, it is worth noting that the <u>concepts of strategic country planning or results management remain alien to China</u> (Huang 2014).” 	9	20
h. State Budget Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss the Issue of <u>budget planning</u> of China's aid • Example: “The actual financial value of aid projects is beyond the capacity of the national economy (Yang 2010).” 	6	10
i. Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss <u>the lack of data collection</u> of China's aid projects • Example: “Chinese aid lacks transparency and Beijing <u>does not release country-based figures for its annual aid data.</u> There are also differences in aid calculation between China and traditional donors (Zhang 2017).” 	10	17
4.2 International Impacts	Texts that discuss the impacts of China's aid on recipient countries and traditional donor countries	15	60
4.2.1 Impacts on Recipient Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that discuss the impacts of China's aid on recipient countries • Example: “Chinese assistance in the form of projects is seen by the common citizens as quite visible. Their job is appreciated most when it comes to roads and building construction (Zou 2020).” 	10	47
a. Local Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that examine China's aid projects' impacts on <u>local governments</u> • Example: “It is true that <u>most of them gain confidence and momentum</u> to develop their own economies by looking at China's development experience within this unequal global market regime (Niu 2016).” 	2	3
b. Resource Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that examine claims like “whether China uses aid projects/to exploits natural resources in recipient countries.” 	1	6
c. Labor Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that examine China's aid projects' impacts on <u>local labor participations</u> • Example: “Cameroonians perform only very low-skilled tasks like cleaning, driving, general labor. <u>This is one of the areas in which Chinese assistance is heavily deployed in</u> Cameroon (Zou 2020).” 	2	10
d. Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that examine China's aid projects' impacts on <u>social welfare</u> in recipient countries (healthcare/poverty reduction) • Example: “Chinese assistance in the health sector has <u>increased the quantity and quality of healthcare services</u> in the country (Zou 2020).” 	2	9
e. Trade, Investment, Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts that examine China's aid projects' impacts on the <u>economic performance</u> of recipient countries 	6	19

Final Coding Framework	Initial Coding framework	Articles N=44	References N=539
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: “China has now become a key partner in Cameroon’s economic development, particularly, in the construction of <u>infrastructure</u>. Strategic <u>economic partnerships</u> are a catalyst for mutual trust and cooperation (Weng et al. 2017).” 		
4.2.2 Impacts on Traditional Donor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts that discuss how the principles and practice of China’s aid influences western donors Example: “Other Chinese scholars have argued that <u>China’s foreign aid is not a challenge to the existing development assistance system</u>. Firstly, China has not attempted to challenge the mainstream economic development theory (Huang and Hu 2020).” 	6	14

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